

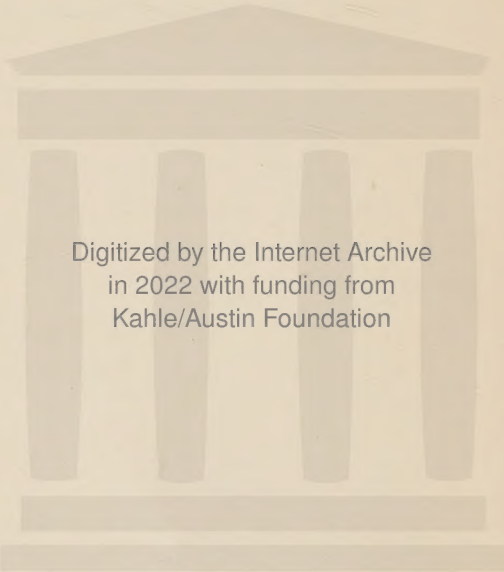
CHOICE
OF
PEARLS
—
GABIROL

**THE CORNER
BOOK STORE**
Portsmouth, Ohio

Peter & Harriet Glick

Library of Jewish Classics

- I. LEOPOLD ZUNZ: THE SUFFERINGS OF
THE JEWS DURING THE MIDDLE AGES
- II. HYMAN HURWITZ: TALMUDIC TALES.
- III. "PIRKE ABOT": THE SAYINGS OF THE
JEWISH FATHERS.
- IV. SOLOMON IBN GABIROL: CHOICE OF
PEARLS.



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2022 with funding from
Kahle/Austin Foundation

LIBRARY OF JEWISH CLASSICS—IV.

Solomon Ibn Gabirol's
Choice of Pearls

Translated from the Hebrew
With Introduction and Annotations

BY

THE REV. A. COHEN

M.A. (Cantab.) Ph.D. (Lond.)

Author of

Ancient Jewish Proverbs, etc.

NEW YORK
BLOCH PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC.

"The Jewish Book Concern"

1925

COPYRIGHT, 1925, BY
BLOCH PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC.

TO MY MOTHER
AND THE SACRED MEMORY
OF MY FATHER.

P R E F A C E

An edition of Ibn Gabirol's *Choice of Pearls*, Hebrew text, "accompanied by a faithful English translation," was published by the Rev. B. H. Ascher in 1859. A word of explanation is therefore necessary in justification of this new version.

In the first place, Ascher's book is out of print and scarce, so that the *Choice of Pearls* is practically inaccessible to the English reader. This reason alone rescues the present work from the charge of superfluity.

Secondly, Ascher's translation leaves much to be desired. His description of it as "faithful" is open to challenge. Several of his renderings are questionable. Further, what he invariably gives is a paraphrase rather than a translation, so that the reader is unable to form an idea of the style of the original. Here is a typical example: No. 31 in Ascher's version reads, "Scruple not to be enlightened on subjects of which thou art ignorant, so that thou be spared the blush of confessing thine own folly." A literal rendering is, "It is not meet to be bashful to ask questions about what thou knowest not for the purpose of

gaining knowledge; and when thou art asked concerning what thou knowest not, be not ashamed to say, 'I know not.' ”

The style in which the aphorisms are composed is terse, and usually baffles literal translation. The brevity of the Hebrew is moreover often the cause of obscurity. An endeavor has been made to keep as close to the original as possible, so as to help the student who may wish to read the Hebrew text; and when it was necessary to insert words to bring out the meaning, they have been enclosed in brackets. Ascher's edition of the Hebrew is the most accurate that has so far been published, and is the basis of my translation, except where stated.

A. C.

Birmingham, England.
September, 1925.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	13
NOTES TO INTRODUCTION.....	24
I. WISDOM (Nos. 1-75).....	25
II. THE DIVINE UNITY (Nos. 76-77)....	38
III. HUMILITY (Nos. 78-105).....	39
IV. FORGIVENESS (Nos. 106-113).....	43
V. DELIBERATION (Nos. 114-117).....	44
VI. FAITH (Nos. 118-125).....	45
VII. TRUST IN GOD (Nos. 126-131).....	47
VIII. HOPE (Nos. 132-134).....	47
IX. PATIENCE (Nos. 135-154).....	48
X. CONTENTMENT (Nos. 155-172).....	50
XI. RESIGNATION (Nos. 173-175).....	53
XII. DIFFIDENCE (Nos. 176-178).....	53
XIII. CAREFULNESS (Nos. 179-180).....	54
XIV. SELF-ESTEEM (Nos. 181-182).....	54
XV. CONTINENCE (Nos. 183-204).....	54
XVI. KINDNESS (Nos. 205-207).....	57
XVII. PERCEPTION (Nos. 208-216).....	58
XVIII. MORAL INSTRUCTION (Nos. 217-240) ..	59
XIX. CONDUCT (Nos. 241-244).....	63
XX. COMPANIONS (Nos. 245-267).....	64
XXI. ASKING ADVICE (No. 268).....	67
XXII. REPROOF OF A COMPANION (Nos. 269- 271)	68
XXIII. TEST OF COMPANIONSHIP (Nos. 272- 274)	68

XXIV.	FRIENDLY REPROOF (Nos. 275-277)...	68
XXV.	LOVE (Nos. 278-291).....	69
XXVI.	ACCEPTANCE OF APOLOGY (Nos. 292-299)	71
XXVII.	SOCIAL INTERCOURSE (Nos. 300-311)..	73
XXVIII.	TEST OF FRIENDS (Nos. 312-314).....	74
XXIX.	KEEPING A SECRET (Nos. 315-322)....	75
XXX.	RIGHTEOUSNESS (Nos. 323-327).....	76
XXXI.	MODESTY (Nos. 328-336).....	77
XXXII.	SILENCE (Nos. 337-357).....	78
XXXIII.	SUPERIORITY OF CORRECT SPEECH OVER SILENCE (Nos. 358-361).....	81
XXXIV.	THE KING (Nos. 362-371).....	82
XXXV.	LOVE OF TRUTH (Nos. 372-374).....	83
XXXVI.	WEALTH (Nos. 375-376).....	84
XXXVII.	SELF-GLORIFICATION OF FOOLS (Nos. 377-378)	84
XXXVIII.	DESIRABLE QUALITIES (Nos. 379-400) .	85
XXXIX.	VISITING FRIENDS (Nos. 401-405)....	89
XL.	VISITING THE SICK (Nos. 406-409)...	89
XLI.	LOSS OF A TRUE FRIEND (Nos. 410-411)	90
XLII.	DIRECTIONS FOR THE RIGHT PATH (Nos. 412-442)	91
XLIII.	THE SAGE'S EXHORTATION TO HIS SON (Nos. 443-496)	96
XLIV.	SEPARATION FROM THIS WORLD AND LOVE OF THE WORLD TO COME (Nos. 497-558)	105
XLV.	DILIGENCE WITH LITTLE TRUST IN GOD (Nos. 559-561)	117

XLVI.	POVERTY (Nos. 562-567).....	118
XLVII.	DEGRADATION OF ASKING (Nos. 568- 587)	119
XLVIII.	ENVY (Nos. 588-593).....	122
XLIX.	HYPOCRISY (Nos. 599-601).....	123
L.	ASSOCIATION WITH THE EVIL-HEARTED (Nos. 602-603)	124
LI.	THE EVIL TONGUE AND TALE-BEARING (Nos. 604-612)	124
LII.	THE BAD NEIGHBOR (Nos. 613-615)...	126
LIII.	HATRED (Nos. 616-619).....	127
LIV.	FOOLISHNESS (Nos. 620-621).....	127
LV.	PRIDE (Nos. 622-626).....	128
LVI.	FOLLY (Nos. 627-629).....	128
LVII.	INCONSTANCY (No. 630).....	129
LVIII.	INGRATITUDE (No. 631).....	129
LIX.	TROUBLESOMENESS (Nos. 632-640)....	129
LX.	OBSTINACY (Nos. 641-642).....	130
LXI.	VICTORY (Nos. 643-644).....	131
LXII.	WHO DESERVES CONTEMPT (No. 645)4	131
LXIII.	SCOFFING (Nos. 646-647).....	131
LXIV.	RASHNESS (Nos. 648-652).....	132

INTRODUCTION

I. THE *CHOICE OF PEARLS*.

The small book, which bears this title, is a collection of ethical maxims, 652 in number, classified under 64 subjects. The number varies slightly in the different MSS. and early editions; and there are additional sentences of an apocryphal character which form no part of the original.

The work was composed in Arabic, the language most familiar to the Jewish communities of Spain and Egypt. Its Arabic title was *Mukhtaru-l-jawahir*, corresponding to the Hebrew *Mibchar ha-Peninim*, *Choice of Pearls*, by which it is usually known. The Arabic text is lost; but the book survived in a Hebrew translation, made probably by Judah Ibn Tibbon (12th Cent.)¹ The "pearls" of ethical wisdom and moral instruction, of which the work consists, suggested the high-sounding title.

No original thoughts of the author are included. The book is a *florilegium*, a collection of aphorisms, and each paragraph is prefaced by "The sage said" or "And he said"—the equivalent of

our quotation marks. This fact does not belittle the value of the author's work. As Dukes has pointed out, "One must remember that this collection was made over eight centuries ago, when to bring together half-a-dozen books involved as much time, trouble and cost as would a whole library at the present day."²

The aphorisms are drawn principally from Greek and Arabic sources. Whether the author went direct to the books of these writers, or made use of existing collections, is doubtful; the latter view seems the more probable. He was apparently acquainted with the "Sentences" of Ali ben Abu Talib (7th Cent.). One collection he drew upon largely was "The Maxims of the Philosophers," by Honein Ibn Ishak (9th Cent.).³ In Loewenthal's German translation of Honein's book, he notes over a hundred passages which are either quoted in the *Choice* or have close resemblance. In the present work, I have usually referred to the *Musre* when it names the originator of an aphorism. Chaps. XLII and XLIII have the appearance of "Ethical Wills," which the learned of those days were in the habit of bequeathing to their children.⁴

The problem of the authorship of the *Choice* will be discussed later. The only point that need

be made here is that the book, at least in its existing form, must have been compiled by a Jew. This is evident from the Biblical quotations (Nos. 333, 448, 460) and Rabbinic expressions which occur (see, *e. g.*, the references to the *Torah*, "the study and practice of the divine Law," in Nos. 29, 287, 329, 334, 439, 440, 473; cf. also No. 387).

But in spirit, the book is unsectarian and super-denominational. It transcends any one creed, and rises to the heights where all the great religions merge in the pure atmosphere of ethics. It prescribes wise rules of conduct and teaches noble ideals, which form an essential part of Religion, as distinct from creed. The appeal is to all men and women who seek to live aright and yield the best that is within them.

II. AUTHORSHIP.

The claim that Ibn Gabirol is to be regarded as the author of the *Choice* has been questioned by the most eminent of Hebrew bibliographers, M. Steinschneider.⁵ He advances the following arguments: (1.) No known MS. and none of the early printed editions give the author's name. (2.) Sayings from the *Choice* are frequently quoted in mediaeval works, but to none of them is the name of Ibn Gabirol attached. Schem Tob

Palquera (13th Cent.) has this statement, "And so, the wise men of the gentiles composed some fine ethical sayings, *e. g.*, the book called *Choice of Pearls* and others." (3.) In Ibn Gabirol's Ethical Treatise, sayings occur which are also found in the *Choice*; but they are not identical in wording. (4.) Throughout the *Choice*, the source of a maxim is not named (the only exceptions are Nos. 242 and 637), while in the Ethical Treatise that information is often given. (5.) There is not the same systematic arrangement in the *Choice* which characterizes the Ethical Treatise.

On examination, these arguments are found to be by no means conclusive, and none of them definitely overthrows the theory of Ibn Gabirol's authorship. It must be urged, as a most important factor in the problem, that the *Choice* is not an original work, but the collection of a compiler. This fact may well account for the absence of the author's name in the MSS., and therefore in the early editions. If we may give credence to the only known manuscript authority in existence, Ibn Gabirol compiled the *Choice* in his youth, possibly for his personal edification. It may not have been intended for "publication," and copies were made only for "private circulation."

As for Steinschneider's second argument, who can tell whether the mediaeval writers were quoting direct from the *Choice* or from the sources whence Ibn Gabirol drew his material? And even if it be supposed that they quoted from the *Choice*, they wrote ethical books for popular reading in which it was not the invariable rule to mention the source. The necessity for naming Ibn Gabirol would have been further minimized by the fact that the writers were citing quotations, not the original thought of the author of the *Choice*, whoever he be.

Palquera's reference to the book supports this contention. It probably means nothing more than that the *material* of the *Choice* was borrowed from "the wise men of the gentiles." Dukes, who specialized in the study of early ethical literature, suggests that Palquera may not have mentioned the author, because his name was familiar to everybody who knew the title of the work; or alternatively, since he used an anonymous copy, he may have been unaware of the writer's identity.⁶ Dukes unhesitatingly ascribes the book to Ibn Gabirol.

The third argument, that the same aphorism occurs in the *Choice* and the Ethical Treatise, not in the identical words, does not carry much

weight. He may have quoted from memory in the composition of the latter work; and further, we do not unfortunately possess the Arabic version of the *Choice* which would permit a comparison with the Arabic text of the Ethical Treatise.

The last two points are sufficiently explained by the fact that the *Choice* is a popular collection of ethical maxims, not for the scholar but for the general reader, while the Treatise is an attempt at a scientific classification of the virtues and vices under the categories of the five senses. The scope of the two works is entirely different, and no conclusion on the question of authorship can be safely drawn from a comparison.

What evidence is there in favor of Ibn Gabirol's authorship of the *Choice*? There exists a Hebrew collection of ethical sentences in metrical form, entitled *Shekel Hakodesh*,⁷ by Joseph Kimchi (died about 1170). The resemblance between this work and the *Choice* is too close to be accidental. It is agreed, even by Steinschneider, that Kimchi made use of the *Choice*;⁸ and we must therefore conclude that the latter work was in existence by 1170. One of the Bodleian MSS. of the *Shekel* has a marginal addition to the Introduction which states, "Solomon Ibn Gabirol,

while tender in years, searched the compositions of the earlier philosophers, and selected the choicest of their sayings which he compiled into a small book." If this statement be authentic, the authorship of the *Choice* is finally settled; but since it is a marginal addition and occurs in only one MS., it is unsupported and open to suspicion. It remains, however, the earliest reference to the authorship of the *Choice*, and should be given credence unless proof to the contrary is forthcoming.

That marginal note does receive a measure of confirmation from what Ibn Gabirol says of himself in his poems. The allusion to his "tender years" agrees with his declaration: "Though I am but sixteen, I have the wisdom of a man of eighty."⁹ Of still greater importance is this statement: "I gather stray phrases into strings of thought, and from scattered words I collect pearls of wisdom."¹⁰ These words accurately describe the contents of the *Choice*, and may well be a direct reference to this work.

Finally, a 15th Century writer cites Abu Aflah (an Arab philosopher of the 12th Cent.) who ascribed seventeen philosophical essays to "King Solomon the Jew." It has been demonstrated that this "King Solomon" is none other than Ibn

Gabirol. Among the writings attributed to him by Abu Aflah is a "Book of Proverbs," which may be the *Choice* under a different name.¹¹

If Ibn Gabirol did not write the *Choice*, who did? The only name that has been put forward is Jedaiah ben Abraham Bedaresi, known as Jedaiah ha-Penini. The resemblance of ha-Penini to ha-Peninim, "pearls," no doubt suggested the connection. But he was born about 1270, a century after the death of Joseph Kimchi who used the *Choice*! The impossibility of conjecturing an alternative author should likewise make one hesitate to deny the association of Ibn Gabirol with this book. Nor can it be said that it is inherently improbable for him to have written it. From his other books, it is clear that he had a wide knowledge of the earlier ethical writers. Our conclusion is, therefore, that until manuscript evidence is discovered which will refute the claim of Ibn Gabirol to be considered the writer of the *Choice*, there is no valid ground for denying the work as his composition.

III. SOLOMON IBN GABIROL.

Very little is known of his life. His Arabic name was Abu Ajjub Sulaiman ibn Yahya ibn Jabirol, and in Hebrew Solomon ben Judah ibn

Gabirol. He was born at the end of 1021 or the commencement of 1022. His birth-place was Malaga, in Southern Spain, and in his early years was taken to Saragossa. He lost both parents in his youth. In one of his poems he exclaims bitterly: "Grieved, without mother or father, inexperienced, lonely and poor, I am alone without a brother and without friends."¹²

Although it is unknown with certainty who were his teachers, he must have been a precocious lad and absorbed knowledge far beyond his years. In a poem, written at the age of sixteen, he says: "From my youth I labored in the cause of Wisdom, for her goal is pleasant. She was my sister from my childhood, and of all men she chose me as her friend."¹³

What is indeed extraordinary about Ibn Gabirol is his versatility. Firstly, he is one of the greatest poets produced by the Jewish people, and some of his sacred compositions have found an honored place in the liturgy of the Synagogue. Secondly, he was a Biblical exegete. Although he wrote no connected commentary on any part of the Scriptures, his interpretation of Biblical passages is quoted by some of the mediaeval commentators.

In addition, he was a profound student of ethics

and philosophy. Apart from the *Choice*, he wrote in 1045 an Ethical Treatise. The original is in Arabic,¹⁴ and was rendered into Hebrew by Judah Ibn Tibbon. His position as a philosopher is somewhat romantic. He composed a philosophical work in the form of a dialogue between master and pupil. He wrote it in Arabic; but in 1150 it was translated into Latin, with the title "*Fons Vitae*." In the Latin version, it had a great influence upon the scholastic philosophers, in particular Duns Scotus. The author's name had been corrupted into "*Avicbron*," and it was never dreamed by the Christian theologians who admired and debated his work that he was a Jew. Not until 1846 was the discovery made that "*Avicbron the Moor*" and Solomon Ibn Gabirol were one and the same person. It is interesting to note that not only was he the first Jewish philosopher in Spain, but he was the first philosophical writer produced by that country.¹⁵

Scholars are divided on the date of his death. Some declare that he died before reaching the age of thirty; but it is more probable that his death occurred in 1069 or the following year. In a mediaeval Jewish chronicle, a curious legend is narrated about his death. It is said that he was slain by a Mohammedan who was jealous of his

poetic genius, and buried by him beneath a fig-tree. The tree thereupon yielded such abundant fruit, of such exceptional sweetness, that curiosity was aroused. The surrounding earth was dug up, and the body of the poet discovered.

NOTES TO INTRODUCTION

¹ He is named as the translator in a marginal note in two MSS., one in Oxford (Neubauer, No. 1975), and the other in Parma (de Rossi, No. 1394). In the colophon of a British Museum MS., the name is given in error as Solomon Ibn Tibbon (Margoliouth, II., p. 122).

² *Salomo ben Gabirol*, p. 55.

³ The Arabic original is still in MS.; but the Hebrew translation by Alcharizi (13th Cent.), under the title of *Musre ha-Philosophim*, has been edited by A. Loewenthal (1896).

⁴ See *Jewish Quarterly Review* IV. (1892).

⁵ See his Bodleian Catalogue and *Die hebraeischen Uebersetzungen des Mittelalters*, pp. 387f.

⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 82.

⁷ Edited by H. Gollancz (1919).

⁸ See Gollancz's edition of the *Shekel*, p. XII.

⁹ See Davidson's Introduction to Selected Religious Poems of Solomon Ibn Gabirol (Schiff Library of Jewish Classics), p. XXI.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Davidson, p. XXX.

¹² Davidson, p. XVIII.

¹³ Davidson, p. XX.

¹⁴ Edited by S. S. Wise with an English translation, entitled "The Improvement of the Moral Qualities" (1901). The references to the Ethical Treatise, which are given below, follow Wise's translation.

¹⁵ Husik, *Mediaeval Jewish Philosophy*, p. 60.

CHOICE OF PEARLS

I. WISDOM.

1. Through wisdom the wise pay in full measure their obligation to the Creator, and [man] attains the service of God during his lifetime and a good name after his death.

2. There is nothing that sharpens the intellect like instruction and wisdom; and there is no truer index to the mind of a man of knowledge than his good conduct.

The word *musar*, "instruction," which occurs frequently in this book, refers to the sphere of morals rather than to knowledge. Its meaning may often be expressed by "moral discipline."

3. The question of a wise man is half of wisdom; a conciliatory attitude toward one's fellow-creatures is half of intelligence; and systematic expenditure is half-way to satisfying one's needs.

A saying of Lokman; *Musre*, p. 39, No. 14.

4. Which man is fit to rule? A sage who has been invested with power or a king who seeks wisdom.

5. For him who holds fast to wisdom and righteousness there is no need to fear any man; the righteous fear but God alone.

6. Intellectual loss is irrecoverable; but wisdom accompanies its possessor wherever he turns.

7. Who toils in the quest of wisdom and instruction acquires laurels; and they who are so adorned weave laurels from the gold of their eloquent tongue which are set upon the heads of their friends.

The word rendered "they who are so adorned" is doubtful, and there are variants. Ascher gives to the word the meaning "Dervishes" who, he says, were generally philosophers and poets. The allusion seems to be to the complimentary poems which were commonly written to honor a friend. The ability to indite these eulogistic compositions depends upon the acquisition of wisdom.

8. Who toils in the quest of wisdom and instruction is hampered from acquiring iniquities and transgressions; for he is led to despise this transitory world and love a world that is everlasting.

This thought is expounded at length in Chap. XLIV.

9. In the place of feasting and revelry wisdom does not abide, but is driven therefrom.

See Nos. 16, 29.

10. He whom the Creator has endowed with wisdom will not be concerned when distress and trouble befall him; for the sequel of wisdom is

peace and tranquility, but the sequel of gold and silver distress and trouble.

For the last clause, see No. 520.

✓ 11. I search not, said the sage, for wisdom with the hope of ever coming to the end of it or attaining it completely; rather do I search for it so as not to be a fool, and the intelligent man should have none other motive than this.

The sage referred to is Aristotle, and his saying is found in *Musre*, p. 26, No. 14.

✓ 12. The sage exhorted his son: Be not wise in words, but in deeds; for the wisdom which manifests itself in action will benefit thee in the hereafter, while that of words remains here.

Cf. No. 59 and *Ethics of the Fathers*, III., 12, "He whose works exceed his wisdom, his wisdom shall endure."

13. He further exhorted him: Seat thyself in the presence of the wise, for if thou displayest knowledge they will praise thee, if thou showest thyself a fool they will instruct thee, and should they correct thee it will be for thine advantage.

14. It is the characteristic of fools to be prisoners of death; free yourselves from these fetters by means of wisdom.

Ascher establishes the technical significance of the word *sippur* "characteristic" in his note on p. 136. He also quotes from Gabirol's *Fons Vitae*,

“For knowledge and action release man from the fetters of nature; and concerning this said the philosopher, ‘Not to such as you applies the phrase prisoners of death’.” It is not physical death that is here intended, but death of man’s nobler instincts.

15. Were it not for wisdom, we would not seek action; and were it not for action, we would not seek wisdom. Better that I should neglect wisdom because I know it not than because of contempt for it.

16. The sage was asked, “How is it thou hast more wisdom than thy fellows?” He replied, “Because I spent on oil more than they spent on wine.”

He burnt the midnight lamp in study.

17. A body without wisdom is like a house without foundation.

18. Who is famed for wisdom is regarded by his fellows with respect.

19. Keep silent and thou wilt escape trouble; listen and thou wilt learn.

—20. Nothing profits a man so much as to know his status and the degree of his intellectual attainment in wisdom, so that his speech is in accord therewith.

For the last clause, see No. 41.

✓ 21. Man is only wise during the time that he

searches for wisdom; when he imagines he has completely attained it, he is a fool.

22. Parents can bequeath no more precious heritage to their children than wisdom; for with wisdom a person can acquire wealth, but through folly destroy wealth and be left entirely destitute.

For this reason a man preferred to marry his daughter to a poor man who was wise rather than to a rich fool; cf. *Musre Haphilosophim*, p. 30, No. 10.

23. If thou wilt humble thyself to seek wisdom, thou wilt be honored when others seek it of thee.

24. Wisdom is the finest pedigree, and love the closest tie of relationship.

It is better to glory in one's intellectual attainments than in a noble ancestry. A similar saying is ascribed to Aristotle; *Musre*, p. 9, No. 1.

25. Kings are the judges of the earth, and wise men the judges of kings.

26. The delight of the wise is in wisdom, and the delight of the fool in folly.

27. How goodly is the action which wisdom beautifies! (How goodly the wisdom which action beautifies!) And how goodly the action which gentleness beautifies!

28. There is no finer combination than humility and wisdom, power and clemency.

29. Who occupies himself with the study of God's Law can scarcely be thick of neck and plump of body.

The thought that indulgence at the table is incompatible with hard study, and that learning is acquired only by self-denial, is frequent in the Rabbinic literature.

30. The sage exhorted his son: Be wise, learn, pay attention, or be a lover of wisdom. Be not the fifth lest thou perish.

The "fifth" is the negation of the four mentioned.

31. He added: It is not meet to be bashful to ask questions about what thou knowest not for the purpose of gaining knowledge; and when thou art asked concerning what thou knowest not, be not ashamed to say, "I know not."

The Rabbis gave this fanciful interpretation to Proverbs XXX. 32: "Everyone who makes himself foolish by asking questions will in the end be lifted up; but if he muzzles his mouth and is afraid to ask, he will have to put his hand to his mouth when a question is asked of him"; Bera-kot 63b. With the second clause, cf. "Teach thy tongue to say, 'I do not know'," *ibid.* 4a; and the saying of Aristotle in *Musre*, p. 9, No. 34, "When thou sayest 'I do not know', thou hast attained half of wisdom."

32. Know that the superiority of intellect over faith is like the superiority of the head over the

body; when the head perishes, the body perishes, and when the intellect perishes, faith perishes.

For "intellect" there is a variant, "patience," which is not so suitable to the context.

33. The worth of every man is proportionate to what he knows.

34. If men honor thee for thy wealth or influence, let it not be pleasing unto thee, for the honor will depart when these depart; but let it be pleasing to thee if men honor thee for wisdom or piety or instruction.

35. The wise on earth resemble the luminaries in the heavens.

36. The sage was asked, "Who are greater, the wise or the rich?" He replied, "The wise."

37. It was then objected, "If so, how is it that there are more wise men at the doors of the rich than rich men at the doors of the wise?" He replied, "Because the wise appreciate the advantage of wealth, but the rich do not appreciate the advantage of wisdom."

The sage was Diogenes; see *Musre*, p. 33, No. 24.

38. Flattering lips are not an attribute of a believer except in the quest of wisdom.

It is permissible to flatter a teacher to benefit from his learning.

39. The first step in the acquisition of wisdom

is silence, the second listening, the third memory, the fourth practice, the fifth teaching others.

Instead of "teaching others" there is a variant "study," which is also the reading of *Shekel Hakodesh* No. 31. But the text as given is preferable, and is illustrated by the Rabbinic aphorism, "Much have I learnt from my teachers, more from my colleagues, most from my disciples"; Taanit 7a. In *Musre*, p. 50, where this maxim is one of the teachings imparted to King Solomon by the demons, the fifth clause is omitted.

40. When thou sittest among the wise, be more eager to listen than to speak.

41. Who duly serves God will be instructed in wisdom by Him, and the outpourings thereof will appear from his heart upon his tongue.

Cf. "Wisdom is a tree, the fruits of which appear upon the tongue," *Musre*, p. 37, No. 10.

42. Nobody is wise unless he possesses three qualities: never to despise an inferior [in learning] while he searches after wisdom, not to envy one who is more wealthy, and not to accept payment for his wisdom.

There was no professional class of scholar among the Jews. The most eminent teachers followed humble occupations for a livelihood, and one of them exhorted, "Make not thy knowledge a crown wherewith to aggrandise thyself, nor a spade wherewith to dig"; Ethics of the Fathers, IV., 7.

43. Ask the wise even the question of fools [to

gain wisdom], and guard it as the noble-hearted guard [their wealth].

Use wisdom with discretion and to the best purpose.

44. The finest quality in man is that he should be an inquirer.

45. Who clothes himself in the garment of bashfulness in the quest of wisdom will wear the vestments of foolishness; therefore rend the garment of bashfulness while seeking wisdom.

Cf. "A shamefaced man cannot learn"; *Ethics of the Fathers*, II., 6.

46. Whoever increases in pride diminishes in wisdom.

Because he does not demean himself to ask about what he does not know. See No. 31.

47. The sage said: I have found wisdom between bashfulness and patience, but the question of the fool between bashfulness and pride.

This paragraph does not contradict No. 45. It points out that when bashfulness is due to self-depreciation and united to patience in study, it does not hinder the pursuit of knowledge; but the bashfulness to ask questions, which is the result of pride, ends in folly.

48. With dread perishes hope, and with bashfulness is lack of wisdom.

49. When wisdom is the loss of the believer, he must seek it even from sceptics.

Although this aphorism is derived from an

Arabic source, it accords with Hebrew teaching.

It receives illustration from the great Rabbi Meir who continued to accept instruction from his teacher, Elisha ben Abuyah, even after the latter had abandoned the Jewish Faith. When warned of his association with a heretic, Meir answered, "I enjoy the sweetness of the fruit and throw away the rind." See also *Ancient Jewish Proverbs* (Wisdom of the East Series), No. 95.

50. The sage exhorted his son: Learn wisdom; for though thou wilt be an inferior with him [who teaches thee], thou wilt be a superior with others [whom thou wilt teach later].

51. How disgraceful is folly in an old man!

✓ 52. Teach wisdom to him who knows not, and learn from him who knows. By doing this thou wilt know what thou knowest not and remember what thou dost know.

✓ 53. The quest of wisdom in old age is like a mark made in the sand, but the quest of wisdom in youth is like an inscription on stone.

A Rabbinic aphorism compares study in youth to ink written on clean paper, and study in old age to ink written on blotted paper; *Ethics of the Fathers*, IV., 25.

✓ 54. Deliver not wisdom to one who is not fit to receive it lest you wrong it, and withhold it not from those who can appreciate it lest you wrong them. Requite not the wicked according to his

wickedness, lest your reward from the Creator be forfeited.

For "wrong them" there is a variant "wrong it"; but the adopted reading is well confirmed.

55. Obedience consists in performing what thou art commanded to do, and abstaining from what thou art forbidden.

56. Poverty cannot disgrace the wise man, nor can lust enslave him.

57. When a fool contradicted a wise man, the latter retorted, "Didst thou understand what I say, thou wouldst not despise me; or if I did not recognize [the folly of] what thou sayest, I would condemn thee. Thou, however, canst not appreciate what I said, therefore hast thou condemned me; but I perceive thy stupidity, so I will judge thee lightly."

✓ 58. Wisdom, about which there is no discussion, is like a hidden treasure from which nothing is extracted.

59. There are two kinds of wisdom: the wisdom in the heart which is the wisdom that profits a man; and the wisdom in the tongue, void of action, which brings reproof from the Creator upon His creatures.

60. There are four mental types among human beings: the man who knows and is aware that he

knows—he is wise, so inquire of him; the man who knows but is unaware that he knows—remind him and help him that he forget not [his knowledge]; the man who is ignorant and knows that he is ignorant—teach him; the man who is ignorant but pretends to know—he is a fool, so keep away from him.

✓ 61. Say not of what thou knowest not “I know,” lest thou be suspected concerning what thou dost know.

62. There is no virtue which has so beautiful a consequence as faith in God, honoring of parents, love of wisdom and attentiveness to instruction.

63. It is the practice of a fool, when he does wrong, to blame others; it is the practice of the seeker of instruction to blame himself; but it is the practice of the wise and pious man [so to act that he has occasion] to blame neither himself nor others.

A saying of Socrates, *Musre*, p. 20, No. 47.

64. Be not ashamed to receive the truth from wherever it comes, even from an inferior person.

65. One who acts the part of a wise man, without possessing wisdom, is like an ass working the mill, going round and round without making progress.

66. Pity the respected man who has sunk low, the rich man who has become impoverished, and the wise man who has fallen among simpletons.

67. Nobody is more deserving of sympathy than a wise man upon whom has fallen the judgment of a fool.

68. Cast not pearls before swine, for they can do nothing with them; so deliver not wisdom to one who cannot appreciate its worth, for it is more precious than pearls, and he who seeks it not is worse than the swine.

69. The reproof of a wise man, who acts not according to his wisdom, falls upon the heart like rain upon stone. He whose words accord not with his actions puts himself to shame; therefore when the word issues from the tongue [only], it does not penetrate the ear.

It is a well-known Hebrew maxim, "Only words from the heart penetrate the heart."

✓ 70. Nobody can detect the error of his teacher until he knows varying opinions.

One should study under as many teachers as possible as a safeguard against being taught what is mistaken. Cf. the Talmudic maxim: "Whoever studies under one teacher will not perceive a sign of blessing;" Abodah Zarah, 19a.

71. The sage was asked, "How can it be becoming for an old man to learn?" He replied, "If

ignorance be a disgrace to him, study must be becoming."

72. Four things will an honorable man not consider beneath his dignity to perform: stand up to greet his father, pay deference to his guests, inspect his carriages though he have a hundred servants, and honor the wise man to partake of his wisdom.

73. Who sitteth among the wise is honored; who sitteth among fools is despised.

74. Beware of a fool who is devout, and of a wise man who is a sinner.

Hillel's maxim was, "An empty-headed man cannot be sin-fearing, nor an ignorant person pious"; *Ethics of the Fathers*, II., 6.

75. The quest of wisdom is like the search for hidden treasure; gold and pearls cannot compare with it in value.

II. THE DIVINE UNITY.

76. The sage was asked, "Tell us, what is the Creator?" He replied, "Discussion on what cannot be comprehended must be regarded as folly, and contention about what thought cannot grasp is sin."

77. A wise man entered the company of some men who were engaged in debate. He said to them, "There is no finality about your delibera-

tion." "Why?" they asked. "Because deliberation implies the possibility of agreement," was his reply.

III. HUMILITY.

78. The crown of the intelligent man is humility; the crown of a fool is insolence; the sequel of humility is ever peace.

79. Said the sage, "When I hear evil speech, I pay no attention." Somebody asked him the reason, and he replied, "Because I am afraid of hearing still worse."

Cf. *Ancient Jewish Proverbs*, Nos. 79, 80. In Ascher's text, the last word but one in line 3 of p. 16 should have been printed as the initial letters of *amar lo*.

80. To a fool silence is the best answer.

81. He in whom the following three qualities do not exist is destitute of a trace of faith: humility in answering the folly of a fool, fear of God which guards against transgression, and gentleness of mind to pacify his fellows.

82. A man came before a sage and said to him, "I perceive that human beings do harm, so my soul counsels me not to mingle with them." The sage replied, "Do not so, because thou canst not stand without them nor they without thee; they need thee as thou needest them. Nevertheless,

be in their company a deaf man that can hear, a blind man that can see, and a dumb man that can speak."

83. It is not a good quality [on which to pride thyself] that thou abstaineth from hurting others; but it is a good quality [to glory in] that thou canst endure a hurt [inflicted upon thee without resentment].

84. The sage was asked, "Which of the virtues [is greatest]?" He replied, "Patience." "And of the vices?" He replied, "Vindictiveness."

The text is corrupt; the last word "vindictiveness" is irrelevant in a chapter on "Humility" and is missing in one MS. The original text probably read: The sage was asked, "What are the good qualities?" He replied, "The endurance of [other people's] bad qualities."

85. Somebody insulted a wise man, and one of his disciples said to him, "Master, permit me to punish him." The sage replied, "He is not a wise man who gives another permission to do wrong."

86. Whose patience is great, his humility is great. His oppressors are few, his helpers many.

Cf. The Ethical Treatise, p. 64: Aristotle said in his discourse, "As a result of modesty one's helpers are multiplied," which saying is found in *Musre*, p. 9, No. 15.

✓ 87. The sequel of strife is always regret, of humility always peace.

— 88. Who is humble will be master, and who reflects adds to his store of wisdom.

89. I affirm [lit., raise myself] that no sin is more grievous than my own transgression.

In Bachya's "Duties of the Heart," a similar aphorism occurs in this form: "I know no sin which is too grievous for my humility." The subject-matter of this chapter favors the word "humility," which closely resembles one of the Hebrew words for "sin." The version in *Shekel Hakodesh*, No. 68, is: "I will lift up my soul that no fault will be found in me when my humility shall be weighed in the balance." We may therefore conjecture as the original reading: "I affirm that no sin [incurred by me] outweighs my humility."

90. Who cannot control his temper is defective in intellect.

91. Refraining from answering a fool is better than answering him.

92. Who is mighty? Who responds to folly in humility and subdues his temper.

93. Whoever cannot control his temper, how much less can he control others!

94. The meek man is the conveyance of the fool.

He endures submissively what the fool imposes upon him. Cf. for the expression of the aphorism

that of Socrates in *Musre*, p. 19, No. 29, "Pride is the conveyance of wickedness."

—95. Who cannot endure one word will have to listen to many words.

In the Ethical Treatise, p. 62, this maxim is introduced by "Another sage was wont to admonish his son."

96. Power and victory are to the humble.

97. The beginning of the success of a humble man is that his fellows assist him because of his submissiveness.

He excites their sympathy. Some MSS. read: assist him against a fool.

98. A man insulted a sage, and the latter said to him, "Exaggerate not our insults, and leave room for peace."

If the reviler only spoke the truth without exaggerating, the sage would be quite satisfied and ready to resume friendly relations.

99. If one hear something displeasing and remains silent, there will cease from him that to which he takes objection.

Some MSS. add: but if he make a retort, he will have to listen to what is still more objectionable. Cf. No. 79.

100. I find humility a greater help to me than all my fellow-men.

101. A man insulted a sage, following him to his house and reviling him all the while. The sage addressed him thus, "Say here whatever is in

thine heart, and then go away before some of our worthless persons hear thee, and thou wilt have to listen to what is disagreeable to thee and receive a thrashing for thy bad behavior."

102. A man insulted a sage, and the latter said to him, "Thou hast not omitted anything that thou knowest against me; but what the Creator knows against thee is still more."

103. When the hand [of ill-luck] persists, let it not lead thee to sin.

Another reading is: When the hand rules, let it not etc.; i. e. do not abuse power. This alternative reading has been explained by Dukes as meaning: When the scales are even, it will not lead thee to sin; i. e., follow the Golden Mean to avoid wrong-doing.

104. Through patience, men avert still greater trouble.

105. Who chooses good escapes evil.

IV. FORGIVENESS.

106. Forgiveness is due to a worthless person just as well as to the noble-hearted man.

107. Forgive him who wronged thee, and give to him who refused thee.

108. Admission of the charge is equal to seeking forgiveness.

109. Admit thy guilt and seek forgiveness; for the denial of guilt is two iniquities.

There is the additional sin of lying.

110. Forgive the sin of thy friend, and expose not thyself to thine enemy.

If thine enemy wrong thee, let him not see that it has been noticed by thee.

111. If thou takest vengeance, thou wilt be sorry; if thou forgivest, thou wilt rejoice.

112. A king gave order to put to death a band of prisoners. One of them addressed him, "O lord king, though we have done wrong in committing our offense, wilt thou not do good by saying, 'Release these base fellows!'" Not one of them spoke as well as he; and the king relented and slew them not.

This anecdote occurs in the Ethical Treatise, p. 88.

113. A king ordered a wise man to be put to death; but one of his counsellors said to him, "Thou canst more easily do what thou hast not done than undo what thou hast done wrongly." So he relented and slew him not.

V. DELIBERATION.

114. Be deliberate and thou wilt escape trouble; be hasty and thou wilt have cause for regret.

For the second clause, see No. 470.

115. The sequel of deliberation is happiness; the sequel of haste is calamity.

116. Who rides in haste is not safe from accident.

Repeated in No. 648.

117. One may be deliberate and reach his goal, while he who hurries may stumble.

Cf. No. 649. This aphorism is given in the Ethical Treatise, p. 92, and is introduced by "A verse reads."

VI. FAITH.

118. The sage was asked, "Why do we never perceive in thee a trace of anxiety?" He replied, "Because I never possessed a thing over which I would grieve had I lost it."

A saying of Socrates; see *Musre*, p. 20, No. 64.

It also occurs in the Ethical Treatise, p. 80.

119. He also said, "Everything requires a fence."

✓ 120. He was asked, "What is the fence?" He answered, "Trust." "What is the fence of trust?" he was asked; and he replied, "Faith." To the further question "What is the fence of faith?" he answered, "To fear nothing." A wise man was asked, "What is the fence of faith?" and his reply was, "Trust in God, acceptance of His decrees, and self-surrender to Him."

121. Joy and tranquility are in the acceptance [of one's lot], but anxiety and grief in resentment.

122. There is nothing greater than faith; but few men endure patiently such misfortunes as poverty, sickness and terror. Yet know that all these [can be better endured when aid is derived] from the gates of faith.

123. O men, supplicate your God that He endow you with faith, for faith is the summit of [the study of] the Law. Beg also tranquility from Him, for it is the summit of greatness; in cheerfulness seek it in this world and the hereafter. In faith is a sufficiency of riches; and in His service a sufficiency of occupation.

124. As for one's subsistence, industry cannot secure it, nor can enmity withhold it. Were one to flee from the provision of his subsistence as he flees from death, yet would it pursue him still more swiftly and hasten more quickly to overtake him.

The inference is that man should have a strong sense of dependence upon God.

125. Who refuses to accept the decree of the Creator, there is no healing to his stupidity.

VII. TRUST IN GOD.

126. The sage was asked, "What is trust in God?" He answered, "That thou trust in Him in all thine affairs and leave them to Him."

127. Who is the wisest of men and the most trusting? He who accepts things as they come and go.

128. It is proper for man not to think that his subsistence is delayed [in coming to him], nor should he worry about the decree of the Creator.

129. The term of one's existence is limited; whatever is allotted to thee will come to thee; and wouldst thou deduct anything of what is allotted to thee, thou art not able to thrust it away.

For *umah*, line 1, p. 26 of Ascher's text, read *mah*.

130. Who abandons hope of what has not reached him, his body is restful; and who accepts whatever the Creator has bestowed upon him, his mind is restful.

131. If thou wilt commit all thine affairs to the care of God, thou attainest the path of happiness.

VIII. HOPE.

132. It is related that a man stood at the king's gate many days without being admitted into his presence; so he wrote to him these four lines in a letter:

133. (i) Necessity and hope brought me unto thee. (ii) In my need there is no endurance of further delay. (iii) For me to turn back without accomplishing my mission would gratify the vengeance of mine enemies. (iv) [If thy reply be] in the affirmative, it will produce fruit; if in the negative, it will relieve [my suspense].

134. A man came before a governor and said to him, "I have come to ask of thee something that I first asked of the Creator. If thou wilt do it, I will praise God and thank thee; but if thou refusest, I will both praise and thank Him, and judge thee lightly." The governor ordered that his request be gratified.

He regarded the governor as God's agent; so that if the request were declined, he interpreted the refusal as the divine will for which the governor could not be held responsible.

IX. PATIENCE.

135. Endure the truth though it be bitter.

136. The sage was asked, "What is the fence of commendable patience?" He replied, "That patience which is devoid of complaint against any man."

— 137. There are two kinds of patience: the endurance of troubles, and fortitude in abstaining from what the Creator has prohibited thee.

138. There are two kinds of memory [gratifying to man]: the remembrance of patience in the time of misfortune; but still better is the remembrance of the Creator in matters which are forbidden thee and would have created a barrier between thee and Him.

139. I am astonished at the person who has not prepared patience for every misfortune, and gratitude for every piece of good fortune.

140. Worry over what has not occurred is a serious malady.

141. To drink a deadly poison is better than worry.

✓ 142. According to the disposition of the heart is the anxiety one experiences. According to one's eminence are the causes of one's fall.

143. Patience is the best of characteristics, meekness the best of qualifications.

Instead of "characteristics," some MSS. read "counsellors."

144. Whoever does not conquer his mourning through patience prolongs his grief.

145. Patience leads to peace, haste to regret. Patience is wealth, rashness poverty.

146. There is a calamity which, when contrasted with another kind of calamity, appears

fortunate. Sometimes a calamity becomes auspicious through patience.

147. To one who is powerless there is nothing better than patience.

148. Which man is most endowed with patience? Who curbs his desire.

149. Who is strong in patience in the time of adversity will attain his wish through the loftiness of his heart.

✓ 150. Patience [makes a man] free, though it cause him [temporary] injury.

151. If a man makes patience [the means of attaining] his end, it will enable him to gratify his wish.

152. Patience may be bitter, but it averts injury from those who possess it.

— 153. Nothing lessens misfortune like patience.

154. Who is honorable in the sight of the Creator? He who has met with adversity but bravely endures whatever befalls him.

X. CONTENTMENT.

✓ 155. Who seeks more than he needs hinders himself from enjoying what he has.

156. A king said to the sage, "Wert thou to make such a request of me, thou wouldst have sufficient for thy needs throughout thy life."

157. He replied, "Why should I make such a request of thee, seeing that I am richer than thou!" The king asked, "But how art thou richer than I?" He answered, "Because I am more content with the little I possess than thou art with thy greater wealth."

In *Musre*, p. 32, No. 22, Diogenes uses this reasoning to prove that he is richer than the king of Persia.

158. Whoever is satisfied with what the Creator decreed for him is the richest of men.

A Rabbi similarly defined the rich man as "he who rejoices in his portion"; *Ethics of the Fathers*, IV., 1.

159. Be content with what the Creator has apportioned thee, and pay no attention to what thy neighbor possesses.

160. Do not long for what He has not given thee; for who rejoices in his portion experiences satisfaction.

161. Who desires from the world only sufficient for his wants, the little that he has suffices him.

Also in the *Ethical Treatise*, p. 61, and introduced by "One of the sages has said."

162. If one wishes to find favour with the Creator with the little that he can spare of his subsistence, He accepts from him the smallest act [of devotion].

An act of charity is measured not by the amount given, but by the means of the giver.

163. Contentment is better than intellect.

164. Wealth and greatness depend upon the abandonment of covetousness.

165. It is proper for man not to seek from the world more than he needs for the purpose of averting harm and necessity from himself; for money is false and worldly wealth comes quickly and vanishes quickly.

— 166. Contentment which keeps a man from baseness is better than wealth which leads him to contempt.

167. Wealth of the soul is better than material wealth.

✓ 168. The summit of contentment and industry is that the greater possessions of thy neighbor appear not great in thine eyes, and the less which thou possessest appear not to thee little; also that thou measure not anybody who is superior to thee [in wealth] by thine own standard.

169. When what thou inheritest [of the world's goods] is little in thine eyes, call to mind the straitened circumstances which befell thee in the past, then wilt thou be content with thy present happy lot; for nothing replaces this when it is lacking.

170. The fruit of contentment is restfulness; the green shoots of lowliness is love.

The love which his friends feel towards him. In the Ethical Treatise, p. 61, occurs: The philosopher Buzuzjmihir said, "The fruits of lowliness are love and tranquility."

171. Regulate the desire in accordance with the means, otherwise it will demand from thee more than thou canst supply.

✓ 172. Two things can never be associated together—contentment and covetousness.

XI. RESIGNATION.

173. Resignation [to the divine will] in the matter of one's possessions is the glory of man, for avarice is actual poverty. (Resignation makes one free, but hope [of more] is bondage.) ✓

174. Regard the whole world as loss.

So that whatever a man does possess is gain.

175. To beg of mortals is lack of faith in a believer.

XII. DIFFIDENCE.

176. Take care of the virtue of diffidence, for it is the index of a noble character.

Occurs in the Ethical Treatise, p. 64, introduced by "A poet said."

177. When diffidence clothes a man as with a robe, his faults are concealed from others.

Occurs in the Ethical Treatise, p. 63, introduced by "Thus it is said."

178. Diffidence and faith are linked together; when one departs, so does the other.

XIII. CAREFULNESS.

179. Who takes care of the members of his body [that they transgress not what is lawful], his attributes will be good; and he who clings to carefulness will not lack his requirements.

180. Whoever is not careful will be despised.

XIV. SELF-ESTEEM.

181. The best of pedigrees is a good name; and there is no more effective barrier to temptation than closing the eyes.

182. He brings honour upon himself who guards his reputation, strives for a good name and trusts in God. That is perfect faith.

XV. CONTINENCE.

183. One's affairs cannot be satisfactorily accomplished until the soul separates itself from its craving and desire.

184. The mark of intellect is the recognition of [the true nature of] things—which should be desired and which shunned; so believe not in thyself that thou art wise until thou canst master thy desire.

185. If one allows himself to be drawn after his intellect, it will direct and instruct him; but if he incline toward his desire, it will lead him astray and destroy him.

186. Happy is he who curbs his desire; he has as testimony [in his favor] the existing but unseen God; for nobody ever exercised self-control for the honor of the Creator and experienced regret.

187. One cannot attain [the reward] which is with the Creator except through service.

Although there is no manuscript authority, it is very probable that the last word *ba-abodah*, "through service," should be altered to *be-hanna-chah*, "through abandonment [of desire]." Cf. No. 497.

188. The fearer of God will have a good end.

189. Who is conscious that God sees and hears him will be restrained from evil deeds. That man reverences His commands and keeps his soul from desire.

Cf. Ethics of the Fathers, II., 1: "Reflect upon three things and thou wilt not come within the power of sin. Know what is above thee—a seeing eye, a listening ear, and all thy deeds are recorded."

190. When one inclines toward desire, calamities dog his footsteps.

191. Protect thyself against [the evil craving

of] thy soul, and thy soul will be protected against [the evil thoughts of] thy mind.

Another reading is: will be protected against thy calamity.

192. Contrariness in speech indicates an inclination to follow one's desire.

193. He is already sunk in folly whose desire has prevailed over his intellect.

194. Who does not master himself to curb his desire is not secure from its evil consequence; nor is he able to master others.

195. When a thought enters thy mind and thou canst not find one to consult in whom and in whose advice thou hast confidence, shun the thought which is nearest thy desire, because desire is the enemy of intellect.

Also in the Ethical Treatise, p. 69.

196. Were it not for three [faults], men's affairs would be successfully accomplished: the aged are not listened to, desire is not restrained, and man's self-pride.

197. Intellect perishes between evil imagination and desire.

198. There is no sound advice with levity, no wisdom with strife, no tranquility with expectation.

For "wisdom" some MSS. read "agreement."

199. Who yields to his desire suffers loss; who resists triumphs.

Also in the Ethical Treatise, p. 69.

200. If thou dost not revolt against the dictate [of desire], it will involve thee in loss and degradation.

201. Who yields to his desire denies his Maker. Great is his grief, deep his regret, and doubled his punishment.

In addition to the penalty for sin is the anguish of remorse; hence the punishment is doubled.

202. Desire is the partner of blindness.

It dulls man's reason.

203. Counsel sleepeth, but desire is awake; therefore desire triumphs over counsel.

204. One of the sages was asked, "Which is the best fight?" He replied, "The fight with desire."

XVI. KINDNESS.

205. It is part of one's obligation to his neighbor to help him with kindness and avoid doing him harm.

206. It is part of one's obligation to a relative to approach him when he would shun thee, and give to him when he would withhold from thee.

207. Act with kindness both with him who deserves it and him who deserves it not; for if he

be deserving of it, thou bestowest it in its proper place, and if he be not deserving of it, thou wilt at least be deserving of it; for God commanded man to do good and practise kindness.

Quoted in the Ethical Treatise, p. 95, with this introduction: Thus it was said in the book on Ethics.

XVII. PERCEPTION.

208. He is not clever who carefully considers a matter after he has stumbled in it, but he who comprehends it and gives it close consideration so as not to stumble.

209. The summit of intellect is the perception of the possible and impossible, and submission to what is beyond his power.

210. The clever man, through the words he utters, arrives at the goal of his effort.

211. Evidence of a man's mind is his choice; and his faith is not perfected until his mind has been perfected.

212. It is meet for an intelligent man to perceive [the spirit of] his age, guard his tongue, and attend to his business.

213. What a man writes is an index of his intellect, and his [selection of a] representative is an index of his discrimination.

214. When the righteousness of a person is being recounted to thee, ask, "What is his mind?"

215. The mind of a man is hidden in his writings, but through criticism it is brought to light.

216. A man's mind is seen in his occupations; and know that his luck [is discernible] in his deputies.

A man has to take responsibility for the acts of his representatives; if therefore a man's deputy involves him in trouble, it is a sign of bad luck.

XVIII. MORAL INSTRUCTION.

217. Be the son of whomsoever thou wilt, but acquire instruction; for nothing can take root without it.

With the first clause, cf. No. 24. The second part of the aphorism may mean: for one is not rooted [i. e. his pedigree is of no avail] without instruction.

218. The fickle has no friend, the slave no loyalty, (the covetous no rest,) the mean person no self-respect, the hasty-tempered no friends.

219. Which man is most likely to achieve his object? Who discards whatever is superfluous and takes the short road.

220. Through much trial comes instruction, through the vicissitudes of fortune experience, and through the virtues of one whom thou knowest to

possess them thou obtainest a knowledge of the same.

221. The clever man will not visit one to whom his presence is irksome, nor make a communication to one who does not want to listen to him.

Cf. No. 233.

222. The clever man, when he visits one to whom his presence is irksome, does not repeat the visit; but the fool is insensible to insult.

223. There is no limit to trials; but the clever man increases his knowledge by their means.

A saying of Aristotle; *Musre*, p. 10, No. 58.

224. If one will not listen to thy words, stop addressing him.

225. If one interrupts thy words, converse not with him, for he lacks moral instruction.

226. Who will not put forth an effort to exercise self-control must not condemn the person who refuses to listen to him.

227. Who will not accept instruction goes under and suffers.

228. Instruction removes bewilderment from the clever man, but increases the bewilderment of the fool. Exactly so does the day heighten the vision of those who have eyes but intensifies blindness for the bat.

229. Never have I sat down with the fear of being required to give up the seat to another.

I have never occupied a position above my station. Cf. No. 629.

230. Beware of the chief seat, because it is a seat of wandering.

Its tenure is uncertain.

231. Instruction increases the endurance of the patient, and patience is a support to the intelligent.

Another reading is, "Instruction removes the stupidity of the fool"; but this is not so probable, although Ascher gives it preference in his translation.

232. It is well for a man to adopt the following four rules: to speak the best of what he has to say, listen to the best of what is addressed to him, be affable with whomsoever he meets, and train his tongue to speak what is good. From four things should he hold aloof: conversing with a fool, arguing with the obstinate, flattering a worthless person, and associating with the evil-doer.

233. Offer not thy food to one who desires it not; that means, do not communicate thy story to one who pays no attention to it.

234. Who indulges in excessive merriment diminishes in reverence.

Cf. No. 425.

235. When is instruction worse than the lack of it? In the case where there is much instruction and little intelligence, and the effort to add to his intelligence is treated with scorn.

236. It is easier to tolerate a whole fool than half a fool, i. e., a fool who wishes to appear clever.

237. The wise men of India said: Seek not companions who lack faith, nor [the joys of] the hereafter without good deeds [in this world] (nor the love of women without moral instruction) nor thine advantage through the injury of others.

238. Who weighs the words which he hears will understand the hidden meaning.

239. Who avoids what is superfluous, the intelligent will praise his discernment.

Another reading: intelligence will praise.

240. Trust men of intelligence and generous character, and rely upon them. Associate with an intelligent man though he be not of generous disposition, but beware of him, taking advantage only of his intellect. Associate with a person of generous character who is not intelligent, taking advantage of his magnanimity while he takes advantage of thy superior intellect. Flee, however, from the mean person who is at the same time a fool.

XIX. CONDUCT.

241. Conduct which is in accord with the virtues leads man to the highest rank and to good actions.

242. Aristotle wrote to Alexander of Macedon: Rule the people and bear sway over them through thy beneficence towards them, thereby gaining their affection. (Better is it that thy rule over the people should rest upon thy beneficence than upon force; for what advantage is it to possess their bodies only?) True possession is that of their hearts. When thou acquirest their hearts through thy beneficence, the bodies will surely follow.

243. Know that when the people are capable of speaking [of revolt], they can accomplish it; strive, then, that they should not talk of it, and thou wilt be spared that which they can do.

✓ 244. When controlling men, control the noble-minded with gentleness and respect, but the base with severity; for by showing respect to the noble-minded man, thou securest him, but thou canst not secure the base except through severity and contempt.

The first two paragraphs of this letter are included in *Musre*, pp. 27f.

XX. COMPANIONS.

245. If thy companion walk with thee in righteousness and loyalty, pardon his sin.

246. A bad companion seeks a pretext for quarrel, not an explanation.

— 247. A man asked, "Tell me, with whom should I associate?" He was answered, "That is a loss thou canst not recover."

For the last phrase see No. 411. The answer seems to mean: If thine own instinct cannot prompt thee aright in the selection of friends, nothing else will.

248. All love has reality, except the love of a stupid person.

249. Thy friend is he who walks with thee in loyalty, counsels thee for thy well-being, and associates with thee on the side of thine intellectual qualities and not on the side of thy lower nature.

250. A man charged his friend saying, "I am at thy service more than thine own hand, and more subservient to thee than thy slave."

251. I have three obligations toward my companion: that I set mine eyes upon him when he enters my presence, provide him with a comfortable seat when he sits, and listen to him when he speaks.

252. The instigator to evil is brother to a murderer, and silence sister to finding favor.

The second clause means: If one is able to remain silent under provocation, he becomes a popular figure.

253. The sage said to his son: My son, exchange not an old companion for a new one while his heart is still true to thee; let not a solitary enemy seem trifling in thine eyes, nor a thousand friends too many.

254. I find all worldly possessions and treasures perishable; but there is no treasure like instruction, no stronghold like companions. Therefore multiply helpers and seek refuge in the dignity of instruction.

255. A friendless man is like a left hand bereft of the right.

Cf. *Ancient Jewish Proverbs*, p. 108.

256. When the death of one of my companions occurred, one of my limbs perished.

257. He is a faithful companion who will never lead thee astray, and will suffer injury to save thee; and should anybody wrong thee, he will labor on thy behalf to do thee good.

258. It was asked of the sage, "Whom lovest thou more, thy brother or thy companion?" He replied, "I love not my brother unless he be my companion."

259. Three things secure for thee the pure love of thy friend: Greet him first on meeting him, provide him with a comfortable seat, and address him in endearing terms.

260. Three things belong to folly: to censure a man for something thou doest as well as he, to notice a fault in another which is in thyself, and to injure thy neighbor in a matter which is of no benefit to thee.

Some MSS. add after the second clause: "to ask for something which is useless to thee" and omit the last clause.

261. There are three classes of friends: Some are like food with which thou canst not dispense, others like medicine which is needful occasionally, and others like an illness which thou dost never want.

262. The sage said to his son: When it enters thy mind to associate with thy fellows, attach thyself to him whose acquaintance will ennoble thee, who will respect thee if thou honorest him, help thee shouldst thou require his aid, justify thee when thou speakest, bear with thee when thou art angry, and should anything untoward occur to thee through him, his manner will not terrify thee.

263. Companions are of three types: the com-

panion who helps thee with his person and money—he is a companion loyal in his friendship; the companion who takes from thee what he needs but would do thee harm for the smallest self-interest—regard him not as loyal; and the companion whose affability is only on the surface and whose friendship is limited to amiable greeting, requiring much from thee, while thou requirest little from him—trust not in his friendship.

264. The companionship of a noble-minded man is a precious find; but the companionship of a worthless person leads to regret.

—265. A man's best companion is his intellect, his worst enemy his desire.

According to *Musre*, p. 5, this maxim was inscribed on Plautus' signet.

266. The companionship of a stupid person is a danger, and his enmity a joy.

267. Amiability strengthens friendship; but a sullen countenance strips off the clothing of a [favorable] reception.

i. e., repels possible friends.

XXI. ASKING ADVICE.

268. The best of animals needs the whip, the purest of women a husband, and the cleverest of men to ask advice.

XXII. REPROOF OF A COMPANION

269. Should thy companion wrong thee, reprove him only in private; if he listen to thee thou hast achieved thy purpose. If he will not listen, speak to him in the presence of one or two that they may hear thy complaint; but if he still will not listen, regard him as an undesirable companion.

✓ 270. No man's reproof will be of avail to a person, if he is not reprov'd by his own intellect.

Cf. No. 433.

271. First reprove, then punish.

XXIII. TEST OF COMPANIONSHIP.

272. Associate only with one who correctly estimates his status; then wilt thou be happy in his companionship.

If one cannot form a true estimate of himself, he will not be able to do so of others.

273. Whose character is noble and his mind affable, his companionship is good and his friendship lasting.

274. Good companionship is a protection against calamities.

XXIV. FRIENDLY REPROOF.

275. I never reprov'd a person whom I did not find searching for my faults.

Only a true friend will seek to inform me of my failings, so only to such a person would I offer correction.

276. A companion who tells thee thy faults privately whenever he meets thee is better for thee than a companion who hands thee a gold coin whenever he meets thee.

277. I love him who acquaints me with my faults only in private.

XXV. LOVE.

278. If to his complete love for thee one adds good advice, do thou add to thy pure love for him the self-imposed duty of listening to him.

279. When the roots [of love] are deeply set in the heart, the branches manifest themselves upon the tongue; and true love can only manifest itself to thee from a perfect heart.

Cf. No. 41.

280. The sage was asked, "What is love?" He replied, "The mutual attraction of hearts and their close association."

281. The eye of a needle is not narrow for two friends, but the world is not wide enough for two enemies.

Cf. *Ancient Jewish Proverbs*, No. 56.

282. Wouldst thou know who is thy friend and who thine enemy, note what is in thine heart.

283. Who cast his troubles upon thee but withheld from thee his happiness, believe not in his love.

284. The sage was asked, "Whom lovest thou most?" He replied, "The person whose kindnesses towards me are many; otherwise it is the person towards whom my sins are many [and he forgave me]."

285. How can one recognize his friend? When the heart and tongue are well disposed towards him, paying regard only to his love and speaking only his praise.

286. Lovest thou thy companion, flatter him not; nor make inquiries about him, lest thou meet an enemy of his who will malign him to thee and cause an estrangement between thee and him.

287. Give freely to thy friend of thy soul and wealth, to thine acquaintance of thy kindness and fair words, to everybody affability and friendly greeting, and to thine enemy fairness. Have regard to what thou hast learnt from the divine Law, be pure to all in thine actions, and [take care of] thy reputation with all men.

288. Beware of one whose love of thee is proportioned to what he needs of thee; for with the

attainment of his desire will come the end of his love.

289. Let not the friendship of the king deceive thee [into a sense of security] when his minister is thine enemy; but if thou art safe from the minister, be not afraid of the king.

290. No man has loved me, without my sincerely returning his love for ever; nor can anyone be mine enemy without my praying that the Creator will set him right [towards me]. Nobody confided a secret to me which I disclosed; never have I set my hand to anything which was not honorable; nor have I consented to anything and then retracted, even if it involved the loss of all my wealth.

291. Thereupon I said: "Patience is good in all matters except when it concerns a friend."

It is proper to exercise patience in matters which affect self, but not in those which affect one's friend.

XXVI. ACCEPTANCE OF APOLOGY.

292. When thou perceivest an apologetic explanation [about to be offered to thee], let estrangement depart.

293. It is not proper to upbraid one who begs forgiveness of thee, or impute a wrong motive to one who offers an apology.

In Ascher's Hebrew text, nine words have been inadvertently omitted, representing "one who begs wrong motive."

294. Who will not pardon a wrong and accept an apology, seek not his companionship.

295. When thy friend offers thee an apology, chide him not for the brevity of his explanation or admission, but pardon him; for forgiveness is one of the noble qualities.

296. A man apologized to his friend, and the latter said, "The Creator has not demanded an apology of thee, since I judged thee leniently; nor could I possibly think bad of thee, because of my love for thee."

297. A man said to his friend, "The wrong thou hast done me only lingers with me up to the time thou offerest an apology, although the former is sure and there may be a doubt about [the sincerity of] the latter, in order that I may have a hold upon thee and my plea against thee stand."

The meaning is: Should an occasion arise when I have to give evidence of my friendship, my readiness to accept an apology will serve that purpose.

298. Who is slothful among men? He who is too indolent to acquire friends; and still more indolent is he who possessed friends and lost them.

299. Accept the apology of one who comes to offer it to thee, whether it be genuine or false; for when one appeases thee in public, he pays thee deference; and (whoever maligns thee in secret does thee honor.)

The *Shekel Hakodesh*, No. 322, expresses the meaning of the last clause as follows: Whenever in private he offereth thee slight, doth he not show that he feareth thy superior power?

XXVII. SOCIAL INTERCOURSE.

300. Beware against associating with one from whom thou canst learn nothing good.

301. Mingling in bad company leads to the acquiring of bad qualities.

302. How can an intelligent man test himself? When he endures the company of a bad wife.

The test is to ascertain whether he possesses the virtues of patience and endurance.

303. A bad wife is like a wolf which may change its hair but not its nature.

304. The worst of associates that a man can acquire is a bad wife; that is indeed a blow.

Another reading is: the worst of bargains.

305. Beware of intercourse with a fool, for often has he inflicted loss upon the meek.

By causing deterioration in his character.

306. When thou desirest social intercourse, associate with noble-minded men; for both the honor

and the disgrace of a person depend upon his circle of companions.

307. If one has involved himself in an evil matter, suspicion will attach to him.

By associating with bad friends who have done wrong, he will be suspected of also having a hand in it.

308. If one bring suspicion on himself, let him not condemn anybody who thinks bad of him.

309. Mingle with the wise, attend to their utterances, and let them not depart from thine heart.

310. What is best for man? That he should possess intellect. If he lack intellect, then money whereby he will be respected. If he lack money, then a wife who will conceal his faults. If he lack a wife, then silence which will hide his defects. And if he lack silence, then the best thing for him is the grave.

311. Four things destroy a man: pride, stubbornness, indolence and rashness.

XXVIII. TEST OF FRIENDS.

312. The loyal friend is he who gives thee freely of his money when thou desirest it, and of himself in the time of thy trouble.

313. Desirest thou to make a companion of a man, first provoke him to anger. If he admit the

truth to thee in the time of his wrath, accept his companionship; otherwise abandon him.

314. Place no trust in the gratitude of a person to whom thou givest [what he asks] until thou deniest him [his request]; for the patient man is the truly grateful, whereas the peevish man is ungrateful.

XXIX. KEEPING A SECRET.

315. Whatever thou wouldst hide from thine enemy, do not disclose to thy friend.

A saying of Lokman, *Musre*, p. 39, No. 12.

Cf. *Ancient Jewish Proverbs*, No. 258.

316. A man once revealed a secret to his friend, and then asked, "Didst understand?" He replied, "Yes, I understood, but I have forgotten."

The secret was so safe with him, that it was as good as forgotten as soon as it was heard.

317. The sage was asked, "What is keeping a secret?" He replied, "I repudiate the person who tells it to me and conceal what he told me."

318. The sage was asked, "How dost thou hide a secret?" He replied, "I make my heart its grave."

319. Never have I condemned a man who disclosed a secret of mine which I entrusted to him; rather have I condemned my own heart which

was too narrow to hold it at the time I deposited it in his heart.

320. Whose heart is narrow [to hold a secret], his tongue is broad.

321. Thy secret is thy prisoner; but shouldst thou disclose it, thou becomest its prisoner.

Cf. No. 338.

322. A secret is that which is between two; but with three it is no longer hid.

XXX. RIGHTEOUSNESS.

323. Who chooses righteousness as a stronghold, to him will men perforce yield.

324. Who has chosen righteousness as a guiding principle, it becomes for him a strong shield.

325. Faith is the offspring of nobility of character.

326. The vow of the noble-hearted is a swift gift, but the vow of the mean person is delay and excuse.

327. Fearest thou to experience regret, say "No," rather than "Yes"; but shouldst thou have said "Yes," endure and fulfil what thou hast said, for "No" after "Yes" is most discreditable.

Cf. No. 290.

XXXI. MODESTY.

328. A sage was asked, "What is modesty?" He replied, "That a man should feel self-shame."

329. He was asked, "What is noble-mindedness?" He replied, "That a man should be scrupulous in the observance of the divine Law, and make a right use of his wealth by fulfilling his obligations therewith."

330. A sage was asked, "What is modesty?" He replied, "Meekness and wisdom combined."

331. [He was further asked, "What means meekness and wisdom combined?"] He replied, "Meekness together with observance of God's Law, good conduct, righteousness, endurance of one's means of a livelihood, endurance of life's vicissitudes, and endurance of contumely."

332. A sage was asked, "What is modesty?" He replied, "Not to do in secret that of which thou mayest be ashamed in public."

This answer was given by an unnamed sage to the question, "What is the aim of moral instruction?" See *Musre*, p. 45, No. 23.

333. Keep far from transgression, for there is no modesty for man unless his garments are white; and part of man's modesty is the right use of his wealth.

"Garments white," cf. Ecclesiastes, IX., 8.

334. There is no [observance of] the divine Law without modesty, and modesty involves the abandonment of pleasures.

335. One is unable to endure the virtue of modesty unless his spirit is generous.

336. The beginning of modesty is to welcome a friend, next to manifest one's love for him, third to gratify his wishes, and fourth to participate in his adversity.

XXXII. SILENCE.

337. If I speak, I may experience regret, but should I not speak, I shall not experience regret.

338. If I utter a word, it becomes my master; but should I not utter it, I am its master.

339. I am better able to retract what I did not say than what I did say.

340. What use is it to me to speak a word which, if it be repeated against me, may do me injury, but if unpeated would not be of advantage to me!

341. Sometimes a word may involve the loss of something considerable.

342. The indolence of silence is better than the indolence of loquacity; die of the disease of silence, but not of the disease of loquacity.

Instead of "indolence," the *Shekel Hakodesh*, No. 230, reads "pain," which is preferable.

343. The best worship [of God] is silence and hope.

Cf. Milton's "On his blindness": Who best bear his mild yoke, they serve him best.

344. Through silence thou mayest experience one regret, but through loquacity two regrets.

One regret for the trouble caused, the other for not having kept silent.

345. A man's silence is preferable to inopportune speech.

346. In much silence, reverence develops.

347. Treasure thy tongue as thou treasurest thy wealth.

For "treasure," there is a variant "guard."

348. Lackest thou instruction, cleave to silence.

349. The bait by which a man is caught lies concealed beneath his tongue; a man's death is between his cheeks.

Because "life and death are in the power of the tongue," Prov. XVIII., 21.

350. The preponderance of speech over intellect leads to deception, that of intellect over speech to blame; but it is good when one graces the other.

351. When one's words exceed his intellect, they overpower him; but when one's intellect exceeds his words, he overpowers them.

352. It is related that a man from Arabia en-

tered a company and preserved a lengthy silence. Somebody said to him, "Rightly do they call thee one of the noble men of Arabia." He replied, "My brethren, the portion of a man from his ear belongs to himself, but the portion of a man from his tongue belongs to others."

353. It is related that a wise man maintained a long silence; but when he spoke, he did so with fluency. One day he was asked, "Please tell us the characteristic of speech, its advantage and disadvantage." He replied, "There are four kinds of speech. First, the speech from which thou dost expect advantage but whose sequel thou fearest—the gain one has in connection with such speech is to abstain therefrom. Second, the speech from which thou dost not expect advantage and whose harmful consequence thou fearest not—if thou avoidest it, thou dost lighten its burden from off thy body and thy tongue. Third, speech from which thou dost not expect advantage but whose sequel thou fearest—that is harmful. Fourth, speech from which thou dost expect advantage and from whose sequel thou art secure—this is the speech it is incumbent upon thee to cultivate. Hence it follows that three-fourths of speech is unnecessary."

354. When thou speakest, say little; for the

fewer the words of a man, the fewer his mistakes.

355. When thou speakest at night, lower thy voice; and when thou speakest by day, look around thee before thou speakest.

356. Give thy secret in a field and thine advice on the hills, that thou mayest look around thee.

Cf. *Ancient Jewish Proverbs*, No. 200.

357. The death of a man is in the stumbling of his tongue, but there is not death in the stumbling of his foot; for in the stumbling of his tongue he may forfeit his head, whereas the stumbling of the foot is healed in a short while.

XXXIII. SUPERIORITY OF CORRECT SPEECH OVER SILENCE.

358. To speak the truth is better than maintaining silence about it.

359. It is related that some men reviled speech in the presence of a king. He said, "God forbid [that I should agree with you]; for he who is able to make a right use of speech is able to make a right use of silence."

360. Nobody's heart should prompt him to speak unless he is distinguished [for wisdom] or is eloquent.

361. Sometimes a word smooths away and averts vindictive feelings.

XXXIV. THE KING.

362. Whom the king accuses, his realm is too narrow for him.

One cannot escape the royal power, so long as he is within the kingdom.

363. Fear God as is due to Him, and the king by obeying him even more than is due to him, and conduct yourself well with your fellowmen.

364. The king and the law are two brothers, one being unable to stand without the other.

365. Reside not in a city where the king is not feared, where there is no just judge, skilful physician, established market, and flowing river.

Upon these depend the security and comfort of life.

366. A king is like fire—if thou keepest far from it, thou feelest the need of it; and if thou approachest close, it scorches thee.

367. Should the king have a suit against thee, make thy words few [in self-defence], since thou art surely vanquished.

368. The worst part of wealth is that which is left unexpended; the worst of companions is he who misleads; the worst of kings is the one whom the innocent fear; the worst of countries is that in which there is neither plenty nor security.

Another version: "in which there is plenty but

no security." This is supported by the reading of *Shekel Hakodesh*, No. 359.

369. The righteousness of the king is of greater benefit to the people than the prosperity of the time.

370. The king's friendship, though it confer dignity and honor, is like a high mountain upon which are all varieties of beautiful fruits but also all species of wild beasts; the ascent is laborious, and to remain upon it still worse.

371. Should a man wrong us, we appeal to the king; but should the king wrong us, to whom shall we appeal?

XXXV. LOVE OF TRUTH.

372. The wise enjoy rest when they have discovered truth; fools enjoy rest when they have discovered falsehood.

✓ 373. In truth is the stability of all things; in falsehood is their ruin.

374. A king ordered the execution of a wise man against whom a false charge had been brought. As he was led out to be executed, he perceived his wife weeping; so he said to her, "Why weepest thou?" She replied, "Why should I not weep, seeing that they are putting thee to death although thou hast done no wrong." He

retorted, "Dost thou, then, prefer that they should execute me because I have done wrong?"

The wise man alluded to here is Socrates. The anecdote is given in *Musre*, p. 21, No. 68, where it is an onlooker, not his wife, who figures in the story.

XXXVI. WEALTH.

375. Often is wisdom contemned because of the poverty [of its possessor], whereas folly is concealed by [the fool's] wealth.

Cf. Eccles., IX., 16, "the poor man's wisdom is despised."

376. A man's wealth conceals his faults and justifies him in his lies; but the intellect of the poor man is despised and his wisdom is accounted as folly.

XXXVII. SELF-GLORIFICATION OF FOOLS.

377. The self-glorification of fools is in wealth and their dishonor is [the lack of] wisdom; but the self-glorification of the wise is in wisdom and instruction, and their dishonor [the lack of] wealth and foolishness.

378. A rich man passed by a sage, the former being beautifully attired and the latter clothed in rags. He said to the wise man, "Art thou he who composed books on wisdom and prescribed

laws [of conduct]?" and was greatly astonished [at his shabby appearance.] The wise man replied, "The superiority of wisdom is not [marked by] beautiful clothes, but pure thoughts."

XXXVIII. DESIRABLE QUALITIES.

379. There are ten desirable qualities: truthfulness, love of one's fellowmen, giving to one who asks, gratitude, good nature, faithfulness, submission to a neighbor, submission to a companion, honoring a guest; and the chief of all is a sense of shame.

380. Lay hold on these good qualities in this world, and they will stand thee in good stead in the hereafter. Forgive him who wrongs thee, exhort people to do good, and keep thyself far from fools.

381. There are thirteen desirable qualities: fear [of God], honor, contentment, patience, thankfulness, sense of shame, liberality, strength [in self-control], zeal, modesty, truthfulness, faithfulness and affability.

382. There are the seven further desirable qualities: respect for one's relatives, meekness, self-condemnation, admission of the truth concerning oneself whether in a favorable time or the re-

verse, the ability to feel ashamed of oneself, control of one's temper, and readiness to forgive.

The wording of this paragraph is doubtful, and I have deviated from Ascher's text which cannot be correct, since it includes virtues which were enumerated in the preceding paragraph.

383. Who possesses these qualities will enjoy a pleasant existence here and hereafter.

384. Perfect modesty has seven attributes: a gentle tongue, benevolence, avoidance of harm to others, fear of acquiring faults, abstention from slander, faithfulness, and guarding a secret.

385. Who is noble-minded may become a lord; but the mean person earns contempt.

386. A noble-minded man entered the presence of a king, who said to him, "Tell me some of thy noble acts." He answered, "It is better that thou shouldst receive the account from another than from me."

387. The king said to him, "I demand that thou tell me." The man replied, "Nobody was ever in my company and I stretched out my legs in his presence." "Why?" he was asked. "So as not to make it appear to him that I have any superiority or advantage or virtue over him."

"To stretch out the leg" is a Talmudic expression, denoting the display of contempt towards an inferior.

388. [He added], "Nobody has ever done me a wrong whom I requited with evil." "Why?" asked the king. "If he were an honorable man, it is due to him and obligatory upon me to forgive an honorable man; but if he were a base fellow, I would not demean myself that such low persons should have cause to speak against me."

389. [He continued], "Nobody has ever made a request of me which I did not grant, since I perceived that his humiliation [in asking] outweighed whatever I gave him, even if I were to lose all I possess." The king said to him, "Thou art fitted to be a lord over thine own people and others."

390. He is not noble-minded who only evinces magnanimity to one who acts similarly towards him, and is friendly only to one who is so disposed towards him—that is merely reciprocation. Rather is he noble-minded who evinces magnanimity to one who does not act similarly towards him, and makes friendly advances to one who repulses him.

391. He whom the Creator has endowed with these four qualities will not be harmed by what he is denied in this world: a tranquil mind, regularity in diet, truth and faithfulness.

392. Two things can never be combined—lying and modesty.

393. A kindly soul, a good neighbor, a comfortable residence, and clean raiment prolong a man's life in happiness.

394. He whom the Creator has endowed with a kindly soul is assured of the bliss of the hereafter.

395. What is the finest pedigree [in which a man can glory?] Benevolence to his fellow-creatures.

396. To a tranquil mind there is both beginning and end; its beginning is wisdom and its end peace. He who has a tranquil mind, his life is happy, his joy abiding, and the vagaries of fortune trouble him not.

397. A noble-minded man was asked, "How hast thou become a lord over thy people?" He replied, "By extensive hospitality, avoiding hypocrisy, and helping the poor."

398. I wonder over the man who acquires slaves with his money, but does not acquire free men [as his friends] by his beneficence.

399. Whoever constantly practises five rules will experience happiness and prosperity in this world and be assured of bliss hereafter: keep thyself far from doing harm, have a tranquil mind, keep

away from hypocrisy, accept good instruction, and perform good actions.

400. He is the greatest of men whose mind is most tranquil and his association with others most happy.

XXXIX. VISITING FRIENDS.

401. (Who neglects to visit his friend commits self-injury.) Who visits a person to whom his company is irksome will meet with shame and contempt.

402. Visiting at rare intervals increases friendship.

403. If thou wishest people to hate thee, visit them constantly; but if thou wishest that their love of thee shall grow, visit them at rare intervals.

404. Endure the walk of a mile to visit the sick, two miles to establish peace between men, and three miles to honor the Creator.

405. Beware of too frequent visits, because that is the cause of estrangement. It is like rain—men loath it when it falls unceasingly, and pray for it when it is withheld.

XL. VISITING THE SICK.

406. (To be visited by a person whose presence is irksome is worse to the invalid than his illness.)

407. An undesirable visitor of this kind called upon an invalid and made a long stay. The sick man said to him, "If there is anything in the house which is thine, or if I am indebted to thee for aught, take it and go."

408. It is related that a man fell ill. He was asked, "What caused thy complaint?" He replied, "My many sins."

409. He was then asked, "What desirest thou?" He replied, "Atonement." When it was suggested to summon a physician, he said, "It was he that made me ill."

In ancient literature, the physician is usually held up to scorn as the creator of the maladies, while God is the true Healer.

XLI. LOSS OF A TRUE FRIEND.

410. The two rarest things in the world, which are becoming daily rarer still, are: money honestly acquired which is expended in worthy causes, and a faithful friend upon whom reliance can be set.

411. Somebody said to the sage, "Tell me with whom I should associate." He replied, "That is a loss which I cannot recover."

See on No. 247. pg. 64

XLII. DIRECTIONS FOR THE RIGHT PATH.

412. The sage wrote to his son: Peace be to thee, my dear son. Reflect upon my letter and set thine heart to my good counsel. Reject not mine admonition, and incline thine ears to my words.

413. Practise what thou findest in my letter, and thou wilt act wisely and succeed in all thy ways. Engage not thyself with anything else, occupy not thyself with anything beside it, and set not thy mind on other matters.

414. Know that wisdom comes through study, study through reflection, constant application and diligence; for not the organs of sight but the heart is blind.

415. Therefore scan my letter and set thine heart to its contents; (for the opening of the eye is profitless when the heart is blind,) and the growth and increasing height of the body useless when the heart is void of intelligence.

416. Hast thou not heard a sage declare that the vision of the eye is useless when the heart is blind, and the pricking up of the ear of no avail when the heart is blind? Many are the men whose appearance will impress thee, but when they speak, they are to be accounted as dumb.

417. Know that he who admonishes one that rejects reproof, and instructs one that will not learn, is like the person who plays music to the dead or cries to idols.

✓ 418. (But for the intelligent man, whose heart is aroused, the slightest admonition suffices;) a single word of wisdom does he fix as the standard of his duty; he draws comparisons and weighs one with another.

The meaning is: the intelligent man is able to apply what he has learnt to the new contingencies which arise from time to time, drawing deductions from his knowledge and constructing analogies, so that every phase of his life is regulated by the principles of wisdom.

419. (His experiences teach him wisdom, expanding his heart) [to acquire] ideas, and making him to comprehend things that are concealed.

420. Formerly had the sage said to his son: Know, my son, that instruction is the summit of intellect, and silence embraces wisdom.

X 421. The quest of wisdom is the entrance to happiness and the garment of friendship; but the quest of folly is the entrance to calamity and the garment of enmity.

422. Pardon is good, faith the glory of man, and equity the best of companions.

423. Wisdom is a precious heritage; falsehood is the entrance to guilt; hypocrisy is the cause of evil and the girdle of enmity.

“Girdle” is the symbol of what is most closely attached to a person.

424. Wrath causes forgetfulness of one’s defence; impetuosity weakens counsel against bad morals; bad morals bring one to contempt and arouse strife.

425. Excessive merriment is a sign of stupidity, and who displays his teeth too often [in laughter] diminishes in reverence.

Cf. No. 234.

426. Falsehood has but a brief career.

Cf. *Ancient Jewish Proverbs*, No. 78.

427. [To frequent] an evil resort arouses suspicion; associating with evil companions causes deterioration of faith, but associating with the good increases intelligence, quickens the heart, makes knowledge to be remembered, brightens the countenance, and proclaims the good that is in one.

✓ 428. ^{moral discipline} Instruction increases the diligence of the intelligent; but how many an intelligent man, who lacks instruction, is condemned through his intellect, since intellect is of no avail without instruction; but he who has acquired instruction

heightens the standard of his intellect and also his diligence.

429. Were it not for instruction, all men would be equal; but the superiority of some men over the rest is due to good instruction.

430. I would have thee know that there is no remedy for the stupid person; he is afflicted with an incurable malady.

431. The intelligent man is a glory to his person, a blessing to himself, an honor to his house, a credit to his companions, and a pride to his family; he sets himself forward or is retiring as he wishes.

432. Though the intelligent man be poor, should he have occasion to converse with a king, he sits among the great and is received among princes; his fellowmen praise him, his acquaintances envy him, his friends glory in him and his enemies fear him; and he disciplines his soul and guards it.

✓ 433. An intelligent man has no reprover like himself; and a fool can have no reprover like an intelligent man.

434. One can have no better guide than an intelligent man of experience; and there is no more loyal friend than a noble-minded man.

435. The wise-hearted are called "men of understanding." Man learns only for the purpose

of possessing knowledge~~x~~ and time instructs him in what he does not know, but instruction profits not him who has no understanding.

✓ 436. (When thou inquirest about a man, ask who is his friend;) for a man's whole conduct is like that of his friend. Therefore when thou art among people, associate with the best of them and not the bad, lest thou resemble the latter.

Cf. *Ancient Jewish Proverbs*, pp. 109f.

437. Know that the fool, though he be present, is never asked for his advice; and when he is absent, he is not missed and will never be treated with respect.

438. If [the fool] be in the company of wise men, he hears things without understanding them, and perceives matters without appreciating them.

439. Beware, my son, against withdrawing thyself from wisdom and loathing it. Take care not to indulge in evil talk when in company, or in chattering in the presence of those learned in the Law, or in levity before the wise.

440. Pay attention to the learned in the Law; humble thyself before a wise man, honor a superior, let down thy wings before an inferior, and avoid hypocrisy and pride; for these injure a

man and are a form of madness and lightness of mind.

441. Know that the attributes of the noble-minded man are: love of his fellowman and overlooking their faults, bearing no grudge against a wrong-doer, forgiveness of him who has done harm, amiability to the poor and paying honor to his friends.

442. Meddle not with other people's affairs and be not inquisitive about them. Reflect on what I have enjoined upon thee, and thy Rock will be thine aid.

XLIII. THE SAGE'S EXHORTATION TO HIS SON.

443. My son, accept not governorship over the men of thy city; and despise not an insignificant matter, for it may develop into something serious.

444. Argue not with a bad-tempered man for thou wilt provoke him. Let not two men who argue only to win foregather in thy residence; and rejoice not when thine enemy falls, for thou knowest not what may happen to thee.

The second clause is repeated in No. 642.

445. Show not thy power in the time of might, for thou knowest not how fortune may turn against thee.

446. Scoff not at the error of another, for thou canst not control the speech of thy mouth; but accept the error of men, as much as possible, as though it were correct.

447. Give not thy friendship to thy friend all at once, and set the truth always before thee; then shalt thou be delivered all thy days from harm and ever be of the class of freemen.

448. The sage also said to his son: Know that the summit of faith is the fear of God and the observance of His commandments.

Derived from Ecclesiastes, XII., 13.

449. Know that God ordains that the lofty shall be brought low and the lowly raised on high; therefore make thyself lowly that God may raise thee.

Cf. *Ancient Jewish Proverbs*, Nos. 226f.

450. Defer not the act of repentance, for fate may come suddenly.

See No. 512, and cf.. *Ethics of the Fathers*, II., 15, "Repent one day before thy death."

451. Increase the number of thy friends, and pay no attention to the act of one who wronged thee.

452. Barter not thy wife for the beauty of another man's wife, for lust distorts the intellect. It has before led astray one wiser than thou.

If a specific individual is meant in the last sen-

tence, the reference may be to King David or Solomon.

453. Think of thyself as poor though thou be rich, for thou wilt be parted from thy wealth.

454. Stand not before the king when he is angry, nor before a river when it is in flood.

455. Decide nothing until thou takest the advice of one who can direct thee. Beware of evil men and guard against their favors.

456. Aim at acquiring in this world a good wife and a good companion. Thy comfort will be in thy wife at home and in thy companion abroad.

457. There is no wealth like sound health, no pleasure like a cheerful heart.

458. Who shuts his hand fast against the poor, God gives to kings sway over his money.

459. Nobility of character consists in the appreciation of [God's] bounty and the acceptance of His incomprehensible decrees.

460. The circumstances of life are of three kinds: those which are clearly favorable—cleave to them; those which are clearly unfavorable—avoid them; those which are doubtful—then “cast thy burden upon the Lord.”

A quotation from Psalm LV., 23.

461. Speak not much without the mention of God, lest your heart grow hard; for a hard heart is distant from God.)

462. Do not notice the sins of other men on the ground that you are their superior, and forget your own sins.

463. Who is clear of three things will not lack three things: Who is clear of anger will attain honor; who is clear of transgressions will attain glory; who is clear of meanness will attain greatness.

464. Ingratitude for a favor done is wickedness, and the companionship of a fool is a serious malady.

465. No man is ensnared who knows his own status and worth; nor does he experience regret who shuts his eyes [against evil].

For the last clause, see No. 181.

466. A man's character is moulded by the dictates of his heart; according to his counsel and intelligence will be his attributes.

467. Who thinks [excessively] well of his fellowmen does not understand the circumstances of the time.

468. Who lapses into indolence is incurable.

469. A man's wisdom is not perfect unless he precedes it by three things, is devoid of three things, innocent of three things and supports it upon three things. The three preceding qualities are intellect, humility and fear of God. The

three things to be avoided are hypocrisy, rashness and unwillingness to accept advice. The three vices of which he must be innocent are covetousness, lust and falsehood; for he who covets sets an ambush, who lusts goes astray, and as for words of wind and lying, of what avail are they? since he will be suspected even when he speaks the truth. The three things upon which he must rely are deliberation, silence and patience.

Instead of "fear of God" most MSS. and edd. have "eloquence."

470. Whoever is able to withhold himself from four things will be saved from four things. The four things from which he must withhold himself are: rashness, stubbornness, pride and indolence; for the fruit of rashness is remorse, the fruit of stubbornness is insolence, the fruit of pride is enmity, and the fruit of indolence is ruin.

471. Who orders aright his secret faults, the Holy One—blessed be He—will order aright his open faults. Who orders aright his affairs for the hereafter, the Creator will order them aright here and hereafter. Who orders aright his relationship with the Creator, He will order aright his relationship with his fellowmen.

472. In the practice of three things one never experiences weariness: good instruction, avoid-

ance of harm to others, and turning from transgressions.

473. The sage also said to his son: My son, prepare thy money, thy sustenance, and thy study of the Law for thine appointed day.

One prepares for the day of death by using part of his money in charitable acts, sharing his food with the hungry, and practising what he has learnt.

474. Fear the company of a fool, as thou findest security in the company of a clever man.

475. Whoever tolerates the companionship of a liar is worse than he; the wicked man cares not what he says, but the God-fearing man pays no attention to his words.

Another reading: pays attention to his [own] words.

476. Who preserves himself from lying controls his tongue, so that his sins diminish.

477. When men praise thee undeservedly, grieve and rejoice not.

478. Who shuns sinners is saved from faults.

479. Better a faithful stranger than a deceitful relative.

480. Habit is the ruler of all things; one cannot adhere to a better principle than to ask advice, nor can good fortune be perpetuated more effectively than through generosity [to the poor].

“Habit,” etc., is a saying of Aristotle, *Musre*,

p. 10, No. 59, and of Plato, *ibid.*, p. 23, No. 1. On generosity to the poor preserving wealth, see *Ancient Jewish Proverbs*, No. 87.

481. Who censures his own conduct in public will be praised in private; and who discloses the fault in himself has already forgotten it.

As the result of self-condemnation, he remedies his failing so that he will have reason to forget that he once had it.

482. When thou findest a person narrating something good about thee undeservedly, trust him not.

483. When thou findest two men associating not for a worthy purpose, the end will be their separation.

Cf. *Ethics of the Fathers*, IV., 14: "Every assembly which is not in the name of Heaven (i. e., for a worthy purpose) will not endure."

484. It is the manner of a fool to praise the opposite of what the person who is lauded knows of himself.

485. Whoever possesses these three qualities, his faith is already perfect: when he wishes for a thing, his desire for it does not lead him to falsehood; when he is angry, his anger does not divert him from the truth; and when he has power, he does not stretch forth his hand for what is not his.

486. Two things can never be combined—a good nature and meanness.

487. Six kinds of people cannot escape grief: the rich who have grown poor, the rich who are fearful about their wealth, the vindictive, the covetous, those who seek improper knowledge, and those who associate with men of instruction but lack it themselves.

488. Three things call for the sympathy of all: when a clever man is under the control of a madman, a righteous man ruled by a wicked person, and a noble-minded man dependent upon a worthless person.

489. It is related that a man upbraided his companion in an assembly of people, saying, "It has reached me that thou hast maligned me." The other retorted, "Association with wicked men leads to the thinking of evil against those who are good."

He must have associated with wicked men, because they were guilty of tale-bearing.

490. Three classes of people can only be recognized through three sets of circumstances: the meek man when he is angry, the warrior in battle, and the friend in the time of need.

A saying of Lokman; *Musre*, p. 39, No. 3.

491. It is related that a king ordered the exe-

cution of one of his ministers, and the following inscription was found on his girdle: "If [God's] decree be true, men's diligence is false; if treachery be natural, reliance on faithless men is indolence; and if death lie in wait for all men, confidence in the world is madness."

492. There is nobody so poor and hungry as one afflicted with eagerness and soul-hunger [for wealth]. There is no wealth like satisfaction and contentment, no intelligence like good conduct, no piety like the fear [of God], no beauty like a tranquil mind.

493. Answer not a fool in his error; for if thou instruct him, he will hate thee.

A saying of Socrates; *Musre*, p. 20, No. 56.

494. I fear to wrong him who relies solely on God as his helper.

495. Begin to withhold thy soul from error. By so doing thou wilt be called wise, and thy reproof will be listened to; when thou reprovest, men will attend to thy words and learn from thine actions.

496. When there are united in a man fear of God and righteousness, no privation can harm him.

XLIV. SEPARATION FROM THIS WORLD AND LOVE OF THE WORLD TO COME.

497. From contempt of this world [men rely] upon the Creator; for they rebel not against Him except in this matter, and they do not attain [the reward] which is with the Creator except by the abandonment of this world.

498. Men search the world only for wealth and ease and honor; but one who searches the world [for these things] cannot attain them, whereas he who separates from it will derive glory through abandoning the quest of anything from men. He is likewise rich through rejoicing in his portion, restful in his body by banishing this world from his heart, and he reaches his goal without trouble or labor.

499. It is not meet for a wise man to rejoice in the abundance of wealth or grieve over its paucity. Rather is it proper for him to rejoice in his intellect and the good actions he has already performed, because he is sure that he cannot be despoiled of what has been, nor will he be called to account for what another [may do because of the bad example he had set him].

500. Seek for that which is necessary and abandon what is unnecessary; for by abandoning the

unnecessary, thou mayest secure what is necessary.

501. Who loves life, let him be lowly.

502. In all good fortune remember its instability, and in every trouble the hope in God that He will make it to pass away; for thereby thou canst make good fortune to endure and be saved from sin.

503. Who does not accept the decrees of the Creator, his heart is grieved over the world; and he who imagines that the only good that the Creator can grant him is food and raiment is brutish. Who looks upon another's possessions prolongs his grief, and it is impossible to provide a cure for his vexation.

504. What advantage the poor man has over the rich! For thou never findest anybody rebel against the Creator for the purpose of being reduced to poverty, but only to enrich himself.

To become rich, he rebels against God by resorting to dishonest means.

505. A person does not grumble about the world until his soul attaches itself to [one of these] four categories: he may be a poor man who failed to enrich himself; it may be care unceasing, or anxiety which he cannot evade, or desires which have no limit.

506. Whose soul is precious in his estimation, the world is small in his estimation.

507. Who is the most honorable of men? He who pays no regard to material good, let whoever possess it.

508. What makes life sweet and banishes grief? For a man to perceive the worth of the world in comparison with himself and his own worth in comparison with the world; for it is an old saying: Who despises [the world], it honors him; who honors it, it despises him, since the end of its wealth may be poverty, the sequel of its eminence degradation, and the consequence of its prosperity pain.

509. As for man, what is in him is like the fruit of the tree; if it is not destroyed through an accident, after it ripens it decays.

510. He may also be likened to a person surrounded by wild beasts, who at the same time encounters enemies at every exit and entrance, so that if he escape from the latter, the others will rend him. He who understands the world from this point of view will not rejoice in its good fortune nor grieve at its ill fortune; as the sage said: "This world contains many sources of grief, and what little joy is in it is gain."

"He who understands," etc., is a saying of Socrates; *Musre*, p. 19, No. 43.

511. Who is noble-minded? He who freely gives in this world to provide for his lot hereafter.

512. Think of thy present life as though thou wilt live for ever, and of thy life hereafter as though thou wilt die tomorrow.

Work without ceasing to make provision for thy needs, without being deterred by the thought that thou mayest not live to enjoy it; but be always prepared for the summons to depart.

513. There are none among the good qualities like these two: labor for an object which belongs not to this world, and lowliness without being contemptible.

514. [Good is] eminence with lowliness, honor with fear [of God], wealth with contentment.

515. The sage said to his companions: Let death be lightly esteemed in your eyes, for its bitterness is proportionate to one's dread of it.

516. The healing of the soul is truth and righteousness; but its injury is in the gratification of animal lust.

517. [Be prepared to] die with resignation and you will live naturally.

518. Death takes two forms—freely-accepted and natural; and he who accepts for himself

death with resignation, his end, when it comes in the course of nature, will be life to him.

The Rabbis declared, "The righteous are called alive even in their death"; and there is a similar saying of Socrates: "Who does evil is dead though in the habitation of the living; but who does good lives though in the desolate places of the dead," *Musre*, p. 19, No. 26.

519. Who loves his soul deadens it.

This is reminiscent of what the Talmud, Tamid 7a, narrates of Alexander of Macedon. He asked the wise men of the South, "What must a man do to live?" and they replied, "He must deaden himself." Cf. the saying of Socrates: "Pursue death, and thou wilt be granted life," *Musre*, p. 18, No. 13, and of Hippocrates: "Who wishes to keep his soul living must deaden it," *ibid.*, p. 35, No. 7. Cf. also Matthew, X., 39.

520. Who loves worldly possessions [finds them] a source of grief; lessen your possessions and you lessen your anxiety.

Cf. Ethics of the Fathers, II., 8: "The more prosperity, the more anxiety."

521. Better that thy soul feel pain with those who are experiencing trouble, than it rejoice with men who are enjoying pleasures.

522. I compare a man in quest of worldly good to the thirsty person who lights upon salt water; the more of it he drinks, the greater his thirst.

523. A man in quest of worldly good is like a

hungry dog who has found a bone and gnaws it. From too much gnawing, blood oozes from its mouth; and the dog licks the blood, thinking that it is from the bone, whereas it is its own blood. Similarly while a man concentrates upon worldly matters to the exclusion of the service of God, he imagines that he is a gainer, whereas he is a loser since he is held answerable for his actions.

524. Who grieves not over what he has not been able to secure, his soul is at ease, his intellect pure, and his days prolonged.

525. The beginning of sorrowful experience is love of this world.

526. Who mourns over [the vicissitudes of] the world displays vexation against his God.

527. It is related that somebody said to the sage, "Instruct me." He replied: Rejoice not in what has come to thee of the world's good, and grieve not over what has failed to come to thee; rejoice in what thou hast already accomplished. Grieve over what thou hast neglected, and dread what follows death.

528. Make remorse thine attribute, and thou wilt attain joy in thy future life.

529. Who succeeds in his business? He who sells that which is transitory and acquires the permanent.

530. One of the faults of this world is that it never gives to any man what is due to him—it either gives him too much or too little.

531. Who reflects over a wrong act [which he contemplates doing] will be far from gratifying his desire and near to the fear [of doing it].

532. Who makes the service of God his occupation, profit will accrue to him although there is no capital.

533. Separation from the world brings leisure to the heart and rest to the body; but love of the world causes disquietness of heart and weariness of body. Who acknowledges God will not grieve over want, and will not be worried about sustenance or his fellowmen.

534. Who makes it his care to follow after the Creator removes from himself anxiety concerning this world and the hereafter.

Another reading: Who makes [the performance of the will of] the Creator his sole care.

535. To every heart there is something which causes it trouble, and trouble in this world breaks the bones and saps one's mental vigor.

536. The sage was asked, "What is thy material position?" He replied, "What can be the position of one whose existence is transitory, who is stricken in his constitution [by the certainty

of death], and attacked on the side of his security?"

537. It was told to a sage that a certain person had acquired great wealth. He said, "Has he acquired the days in which to spend it?"

538. It is related that an Indian king handed a document to one of his attendant slaves, and said to him, "When thou seest that I am very angry, deliver it back to me." Therein was written, "Desist, for thou art not divine but a transient body, one part of which consumes the other, and it will return to worms and dust."

539. The king of Sheba had a dwarf slave, and ordered him to stand before him whenever he commanded anybody to be flogged, and say, "My lord king, remember the day of judgment."

This anecdote occurs in the Ethical Treatise, p. 59, where the king's name is given as Ardeshir.

540. It is related that a wise man sold an estate for 80,000 golden dinars. When he was asked, "Why dost thou not allocate part of the money as provision for thy children?" he replied, "I set all of it aside as provision for myself with the Creator, and I leave Him to provide for my children." He had given the whole amount to charity.

Something analogous is related in the Talmud, Bab. Bat., 11a, of the Jewish convert, King Monobazos. See *Hebrew Tales*, ed. Kohut, pp. 46f.

541. It was told of a sage that a certain man had died in the vigor of health. He said, "Can anyone be deemed in health when death is suspended around his neck?"

542. A sage noticed a man worrying and said, "If thine anxiety be with reference to this world, God has already relieved thee of it; but if thine anxiety be with reference to the hereafter, may God intensify it."

If the anxiety was caused by financial loss, then the decrease in his worldly goods had lessened his worry. See No. 520.

543. When a man of intelligence understands the world, he finds it to be an enemy wearing the garment of a friend.

Instead of "understands," the MSS. read "examines."

544. It is related that a sage fell ill. They asked him, "How is thy position?" He replied, "What can be the position of one who wishes to set out on a long journey without provisions, and descend a pit in the desert without companions; who is about to enter the presence of the King, who had previously warned him, without having any defence? When one is faced with all these troubles, what can be his position?"

545. The sage was thereupon asked, "But what is to happen after all that?" He replied, "Who

has acquired much [in the hereafter] at a small price [in this world], perceived all these troubles, and controlled the lust of the lesser world for the sake of the greater world, happy is he, happy is he!"

546. It is related that in Roman territory a stone was found with the following Latin inscription: "O man, act while it is still in thy power so to do, and cast thy burden upon God; let not the passion of thy lust lead thee to sin, and set not thine heart to see the worry of a day which has not dawned, for if it is to happen in thy lifetime, the Creator will bring it upon thee perforce."

In Ascher's text, the Hebrew sentence for "let not the passion.....sin" has fallen out by mistake.

547. [The text continued:] "Be not astonished concerning the hoarding of wealth, for many men hoard it for the [future] husbands of their wives; and whatever man lessens in expenditure upon himself causes increase of treasure to another. The intelligent man is he who is admonished by these words and acts accordingly."

548. It is related that there was found in Greece, upon the gate of a ruined city, a stone bearing this Greek inscription: "O man, wert thou to consider the fewness of the days which

remain to thee, thou wouldst despise what thou hopest for, decreasing thy desires, and thou wouldst curtail thine activity and plans; for thy fate is to experience remorse on the day when thy feet totter, and the members of thy household and thy slaves abandon thee, thy relatives forsake thee, thy friends take leave of thee, and thou returnest no more to thy house and cease from all thy works."

549. It was further inscribed: "O man, thou desirest from the world fleeting lust, from its pleasures that which passes away, and from its wealth as much as thou canst extract. Thereby thou dost accumulate iniquities for thyself, but riches for the children of thy house; since when thou diest, thou wilt bear thine iniquities to thy grave and leave behind thy riches to the children of thy house."

550. A man said to a sage, "How great is thy poverty!" He retorted, "If thou didst understand what poverty really is, thou wouldst keep thy sympathy for thyself rather than bestow it upon me."

He meant that true poverty is of the intellect, and sympathy is to be reserved for fools. In *Musre*, p. 21, No. 66, this anecdote is related of Socrates and "the king's son."

551. It is related that a sage was in a province where the inhabitants were in great distress; but he conducted himself as usual and took no notice of the distress. They said to him, "Art thou not grieved because we are all in such trouble?" He replied, "Certainly not." "Why?" they asked; and he answered, "If I had seen this in my dream, I would have paid no attention to it on waking. Therefore I am not grieved at what I see; for when I return to my true understanding, the affairs of the world appear as a dream and pure counsel is like the awakening. Just as a torch is the eye of light, so is the intellect the eye of the soul; and as the sun is the light of the world, so is the soul the light of the body."

552. It is related that there was discovered in Arabia inscriptions upon three tombs. On one was inscribed: "How can one find enjoyment in life when he knows that God will judge us for the good and bad we do, and requite us accordingly!" On the second was inscribed: "How can one be joyful when he knows that death may come to him suddenly, remove him from power and eminence, and make him to rest in the house of darkness which is appointed for him!" On the third was inscribed: "How can one find enjoyment in life when he proceeds to a cave which

destroys his appearance, changes the brightness of his face, and consumes his body with its limbs!"

553. Many a man alights upon a day which he will not complete, and hopes for a tomorrow which is not in his lifetime.

554. Could ye but see the fate and destinies of life, ye would despise wealth and its vicissitudes.

555. The human being toils for what his heir will enjoy, and the grave inherits [the body] for which he labors.

556. What is best in thy world is only a mixture; thou canst not partake of its honey unless it be mixed with poison.

557. When the thing is about to be accomplished from which thou hopest to gain, look for its failure on hearing that it has been accomplished.

Since nothing is certain and stable in this world.

558. The fear of God is strength and honor; but thy glorification in this world is loss and contempt.

XLV. DILIGENCE WITH LITTLE TRUST IN GOD.

559. Which man's anxiety is prolonged? Whose heart is not certain of his subsistence.

560. He worries that his care will never end and is weary without prospect of rest, who makes the sordid aims of his diligence to prevail over the glory of contentment, and who seeks more than he needs, and who envies his fellowmen for what the Creator has bestowed upon them.

561. A sage passed by a certain man and said to him, "How is thy diligence in worldly matters?" He replied, "I pursue after them." He asked, "Hast thou attained anything?" "No," was the answer, "except a very little." He then said to him, "If thou hast not attained in this world what thou hast pursued except a very little, what wilt thou have attained of the hereafter which thou dost not pursue at all!"

XLVI. POVERTY.

562. None is poorer than he who rejoices not in his portion and whose eye is never satisfied.

563. None is so poor as the man whose heart is anxious about poverty.

564. The grave rather than poverty.

565. The sage was asked, "How is thy material condition?" He replied, "What can be the condition of one who has lost his money, but whose manner of living remains the same!"

566. Give to him whose superior thou wishest

to be; decline to accept anything from him whose equal thou wishest to be; honor him by whom thou desirest to be honored, and ask a favor of him in whose eyes thou wishest to be lightly esteemed.

567. When a man's wealth diminishes, his children do not accept his opinion and they contradict his words and commands.

XLVII. DEGRADATION OF ASKING.

568. Regard not what thy hand can find and thou canst obtain by degrading thy status and by destroying the brightness of thy countenance; for what thou hast lost is superior to what thou hast gained.

569. I have tasted the bitterness of all things, but I have found nothing so bitter as the taste of asking.

570. What is the wound which is incurable? When a noble-minded man has occasion to ask something of a mean person and is refused.

571. Better is the lack of a necessity than asking for it of one who is unfit to be asked; and the greatest evil is when he will not grant the request.

572. A man came to a sage and said to him, "Pray on my behalf to thy God that He never make me to need anything of my fellowmen."

He replied, "It is impossible that thou shouldst never have recourse to others; but may God never make thee to require anything of the worthless among men."

573. A sage used to utter this prayer: "Make me never to want anything of evil men; but if Thou makest me dependent upon any of Thy creatures, may it be upon the good and sensitive among them, the noble-hearted among them, upon them whose tongue is sweet, and upon the man who will not remember the favor against me so as to put me to shame."

574. The sage said to his son: "Pray to the Lord thy God that He grant not thy subsistence through the wicked among His creatures; for that is misfortune indeed."

575. Who asks for more than he needs or merits deserves that it should be refused him.

576. Meanness leads to moral deterioration, rashness to error, and [excessive] diligence to loss.

577. Who keeps extending the time of fulfilling his promise and then withholds his favor from thee, in sculptured images wilt thou find his like.

It is as much use asking a favor of a lifeless image.

578. When thou makest a request of a mean

person, he will refuse thee and also bear thee enmity.

579. Who makes a request of a mean person is more degraded than he.

580. The guest of a mean person need not be afraid of indigestion, nor will he require medicine.

The strange word, which I have rendered "indigestion," is translated "nausea" by Ascher. It is the transliteration of the Arabic *kabas*, "pain in the liver."

581. Who accepts the hospitality of a mean person subjects his animal to deprivation; nor will he find it necessary to purge himself.

582. A king once asked his ministers, "What is worst of all?" They replied, "Poverty." He retorted, ["Worst of all is] the meanness which does not leave a person until disgrace overwhelms him."

583. Who seeks anything of a mean person is like one who tries to catch fish in a desert.

584. A noble-hearted man said to his companions, "When you require something of me, do not seek it of me in person, because I do not wish to perceive in you the degradation of asking; rather write me your request in a letter."

585. Who lowers his dignity by asking does not

secure enough in exchange, though he thereby succeed in growing rich.

586. If thou weighest the asking against the gift, the former outbalances the latter.

587. When thou askest, ask of magnanimous and kind-hearted men; ask not of the mean person, for he takes no pleasure in thy asking.

XLVIII. ENVY.

588. It is a defect in character to envy a friend who quietly enjoys his happiness.

✓ 589. Envy is to men like bodily ailments—it leads to consumption.

590. The sage said to his son: My son, beware of envy, for it is noticeable in thee but not in thine enemy.

The enemy will not mind being envied.

✓ 591. I have not seen one who wrongs himself more than does the envious person; his mourning is unceasing, his soul grieves, his intellect deteriorates and his heart is disquieted.

592. Everybody can eat with satisfaction except the man who envies good fortune; for he is only pleased by the misfortune [of others].

593. The envious person is guilty, because he hates what the Creator wills, and out of the ex-

cessive evil of his heart is vexatious concerning what He has granted another and denied him.

594. Every enmity has the possibility of cure, except the enmity of him who hates thee from envy.

In the Ethical Treatise, p. 72, this aphorism is introduced by "The poet saith."

595. The days of the envious person are few, because he grieves over what neither harms nor benefits him, so that he dies in sorrow.

596. A man said to his friend, "I love thee." The other said, "Why shouldst thou not love me? Thou art not of the same trade as myself, neither art thou my relative or neighbor; and I obtain my living from others!"

597. Envy not thy brother for what he has; he enjoys his life whilst thou art sated with vexation and unrest.

598. Thou hast sufficient revenge of the envious person that he grieves over thy happiness and good fortune.

Also occurs in the Ethical Treatise, p. 90; in *Musre*, p. 41, No. 34, it is given as a maxim of a Roman philosopher.

XLIX. HYPOCRISY.

599. Who adorns himself with [virtues] which

he does not possess will be exposed when the test is applied.

600. Who adorns himself with what is not in his nature desires to force nature, whereas nature forces him. He is like one who dyes his grey hair, but the growth exposes [the whiteness].

“Nature forces him,” i. e., his true character is bound to show itself.

601. It is bad enough for a man to have a failing which he has hidden from himself revealed to him by others, that he should condemn others for an act of which he is himself guilty, and do harm to his neighbor.

L. ASSOCIATION WITH THE EVIL-HEARTED.

602. Who is intensely wicked of heart, his name is bad and his death bad.

603. An evil companion is like a serious illness which spreads all over the body. Such an one searches for the failings of his companion and overlooks his merits.

LI. THE EVIL TONGUE AND TALE-BEARING.

604. A certain person talked of his companion's failings in the presence of an eminent man. The latter said to him, “Thou hast indicated to me

how numerous are thy failings by narrating at length the failings of another; since he who searches for the failings of others does so only in accordance with his own and their like."

✓605. A man said to his companion, "I wish to avoid thee, because people speak against thee." He replied, "Hast ever heard me speak against others?" "No," was the reply. "That being so, avoid those who speak [slander]," he retorted.

✓606. A man condemned his companion because of something he had heard about him, and the latter defended himself. "But was it not a trustworthy person who told me?" exclaimed the other. "If he were a trustworthy person, he would not have told thee," was the retort.

✓607. A man said to his companion, "It has reached me that thou art speaking against me." He replied, "If so, it means that thou art more honored in my estimation than I myself."

Because a man never slanders his inferior.

✓608. A man said to his companion, "It has reached me that thou art speaking against me." He replied, "My soul is too precious in my estimation for that."

I would never stain my soul by such an offence.

609. Who believes tale-bearing will have no

friend left to him, even though he be beloved and a kinsman.

610. Abandon not a friend because of the slander of a tale-bearer.

611. Reveal not the secrets of the evil-doing of others, lest the Creator disclose the secrets of thy evil-doing. Rather recount what is good about them when thou mentionest their name, and censure them not for faults which are thine also.

612. Who carries calumny is himself the calumniator.

LII. THE BAD NEIGHBOR.

613. God deliver me from a bad neighbor whose eye watches me and whose heart plans against me; for should he see anything good in me he overlooks it, but the bad he discloses.

Read *libbo* for *libbi* in Ascher's text.

614. The sage was asked, "Which is the worst malady?" He replied, "A bad neighbor—if thou keepest close to him, he will cause thee trouble; if thou holdest aloof from him, he will speak against thee and narrate whatever is to thy discredit."

615. Who patiently bears the injury done to him by his neighbor, God will cause him to take possession of his house.

LIII. HATRED.

616. Who sows hatred reaps remorse.

Quoted in the Ethical Treatise, p. 72.

617. The sage was asked, "How can a man avenge himself on his enemy?" He replied, "By accumulating additional excellence in himself."

Occurs also in the Ethical Treatise, p. 75, and is prefaced by "Plato, the author of the laws in regard to vengeance, said." It is likewise included in *Musre*, p. 25, No. 47.

618. Beware of a man's enmity, though he be insignificant; for sometimes a person of importance has been choked by a tiny insect.

619. There is no greater evil than hatred of one's fellow-creatures.

LIV. FOOLISHNESS.

620. Five characteristics are found in a fool and nobody else: he takes provocation without cause, aspires to a position for which he is unfitted, wearies his body to no purpose, cannot distinguish friend from foe, and discloses a secret. Two further qualities may be added: he answers before he hears, and is very inquisitive.

There is an alternative reading to "aspires," etc., viz., "he gives to the undeserving," and this is supported by *Shekel Hakodesh*, No. 365.

621. A man's friend is his intellect, and his enemy is his foolishness.

Cf. No. 265.

LV. PRIDE.

622. Who does not glory in himself raises his status; who does glory in himself lowers it.

A similar aphorism is ascribed to Hillel: "My lowliness is my eminence," Exodus Rabba, XLV., §5.

623. Who trusts in his own counsel goes astray; who relies upon his own intelligence stumbles; (and who glories over his fellows is brought low.)

624. I wonder at the human being whose entrance into the world is through so unclean a channel—whence has he pride!

625. Who indulges in self-glory forms too high an opinion of himself through the defect of his mind, and manifests joy on that account. And that is called pride!

626. The sage was asked, "What is pride?" He replied, "Stupidity of which its possessor is unable to divest himself."

LVI. FOLLY.

627. Friend and foe are all one in the estimation of the stupid person.

628. In whose estimation all men are alike suffers from incurable stupidity.

629. Who is deserving of contempt? He who enters a place which is not becoming to him, or who enters a place and is told "Sit here," but he says "No, I will sit here"; also he who expatiates at great length upon a subject about which nobody asked him.

LVII. INCONSTANCY.

630. A friend who is inconstant and changeable in his friendship regard as an enemy and never repose confidence in him.

LVIII. INGRATITUDE.

631. When thou displayest honor to thy friend as is due to him, and he does not the same to thee, it is better to abandon him.

LIX. TROUBLESOMENESS.

632. Who enters the company of men and sits down without their permission will be despised until he stands up.

633. Get rid of the troublesome person by paying little attention to him.

634. Eating with a friend is a condiment, but with an enemy is indigestion.

For the word translated "indigestion," see on No. 580.

635. When one talks at excessive length, people grow disgusted with his words.

636. A king had engraved on his signet, "Thou hast become irksome, get up"; and when a troublesome person was in his company, he showed the ring to him.

637. The sage charged his son: Associate not with men who are irksome, for I have found in a medical work that associating with such persons is a quartan fever.

An intermittent fever which is felt each fourth day.

638. If one renders himself troublesome to thee and wearies thee with his requests, make thine ears deaf to him and thine eyes blind.

639. When the troublesome person perceives that he is troublesome, he ceases to be troublesome.

640. Associate not with a person who is troublesome, because his company leads to vexation.

LX. OBSTINACY.

641. Who is obstinate in his relations with thee will part from thee and become thine enemy.

642. Be not obstinate with a bad-tempered person, for thou wilt rouse his anger and be to blame;

and let not two men who argue only to win foregather in thy residence.

The last clause is repeated from No. 444.

LXI. VICTORY.

643. Who is the victor through evil means is defeated.

644. The sage asked his son, "Dost desire to triumph over a wicked man?" He replied, "Yes." "Thou wilt not triumph over him until thou art worse than he," was the retort.

A similar saying is ascribed to Diogenes; *Musre*, p. 32, No. 21.

LXII. WHO DESERVES CONTEMPT.

645. There are eight who, when men despise them, have only themselves to blame: who attends a banquet without having been invited; who gives orders in a man's house in the presence of the owner; who seeks honor from his enemy; who asks a favor of a mean person; who intervenes in the affairs of two men without their inviting his intervention; who slights a king; who occupies a position for which he is unfitted; and who tells his tale to a person who has no desire to listen.

LXIII. SCOFFING.

646. Scoffing drives away reverence.

647. Who acts the scoffer will be lightly esteemed, and who talks too much will thereby become known [for what he is].

LXIV. RASHNESS.

648. Who rides in haste is not safe from accident.

Repeated from No. 116.

649. Deliberation which ends in success is better than rashness which ends in failure.

Cf. Nos. 115, 117.

650. Truthful speech is the fruit of modesty, [excessive] diligence the fruit of intense desire. Deliberation is a tower of strength, and impetuosity leads to remorse.

651. An eminent man was asked, "How didst thou attain all this honor, although thou art an Ethiopian?" He replied, "Through truthfulness and loyalty, by abstaining from artifice, and never asking for what was not essential to me."

652. The summit of all instruction is silence; the summit of intellect lowliness; and who talks too much will thereby become known [for what he is].

The last clause is repeated from No. 647. It may have been inserted here in error, and the book has a more impressive conclusion without it.

50



O8-ADF-876